



Medical Professionals

It's The "Big Day"!



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Your pregnancy is now near full term (37 weeks). It has been a time of excitement, wonder, anxiety, and at times fear. If this is your first pregnancy, it is all very normal to have many questions about the next phase, **Labor and Delivery**. No two pregnancies are the same just as no two labor and deliveries are the same.

At this point, your bag should be packed and ready to go. Items that you should include are clothes for you and your new baby and toiletries. Make sure to bring along any pertinent medical, obstetrical and medication information with you. Also consider bringing items such as gum, hard candy, music, and a favorite pillow. Don't forget Dad in this planning. Inside tip; have Dad wear a tee shirt to have the baby's footprints applied once the baby has arrived. Make sure to have

the car seat installed and checked by an authorized person such as your local police department for that first trip home.

Now you are ready for the big day. Anxiety and anticipation are common at this point. You are not

alone in feeling like this. Let's begin with some of the many questions you may have. Of course the big question:

? How will I know what contractions are?

Women have a sixth sense regarding this. Labor contractions as opposed to Braxton-Hicks contractions (false labor contractions) are usually different in intensity and frequency. You will sense a difference in what you feel.

? When should I call my doctor?

This can vary by physician, generally you would call when contractions are five minutes apart for one hour or more, leaking of watery liquid, vaginal bleeding, or perceived decrease in movement of your baby. Certainly, it is best to call with any concerns that you may have. If it is determined that you are in labor, you will be instructed to go to the hospital and be admitted to the Labor & Delivery Unit. Upon admission you will have



blood drawn, intravenous fluids given, and you will be placed on a fetal monitor so that your contractions and the baby's heartbeat can be evaluated.

? How long will it take?

Each woman's birthing experience is unique to them and is dependant on many variables. If contractions are in a regular pattern example (every 3 minutes) cervical dilation, measurement of the opening of the uterus of 0 to 4 centimeters can take a variable amount of time. From 4 cm. to 10 cm should progress by approximately 1 cm per hour. The pushing segment is also determined in duration and is dependent on many factors. Usually, a first pregnancy may take 2 to 3 hours of pushing, subsequent pregnancies 1-2 hours. Once the baby is born, you will have to push just a little more to deliver the placenta. You will now think

What Now?

that you are all done, however, now you have to raise them!

? Will it hurt?

Yes, there is pain associated with labor. The amount of discomfort is different for each individual and this is determined by your own pain tolerance, the size and position of the baby and the intensity of the contractions.

? How can I deal with the pain?

Your doctor or Midwife wants your childbirth experience to be as comfortable as possible. Non-medication options for relief of pain are breathing and relaxation techniques, showers, soaking tubs or whirlpools. However, medications to relieve pain are also an option to you. Analgesic medications such as morphine and stadol are narcotic pain medications that can decrease your perception of pain and are administered intramuscularly or intravenously. However, they are only an option in the early stages of labor as they transiently affect the baby making them sleepy and decreasing their effort to breath.

Regional anesthesia for labor is the only way to fully relieve pain. The two choices of this type of pain relief is epidural and spinal anesthesia and are safe for both mother and baby. Epidural anesthesia is administered via a small tube that is inserted through a needle into an area of your lower back, and then a local anesthetic

medication is injected. The epidural will last as long as you have the catheter in place and provide relief from the pain of contractions however allows you to feel the pressure which helps you to know when to push. Spinal anesthesia is a needle placed and removed after medication is injected. This is most commonly used for Cesarean deliveries.

? How will I know when to push?

Hopefully, you have attended a birthing class. If not, don't worry the labor and delivery staff are experts on this subject. Once you are fully dilated, you will be given instruction and coaching on the "pushing" in addition to the natural urge to push many women feel. It takes a short time to get the hang of this.

? Can Dad cut the umbilical cord?

In most cases, **Yes!** This is your big moment. Don't be afraid, the baby does not feel this. Don't forget about the footprints on your tee shirt at this time.

Last inside tip:

During labor try to get some sleep if possible. It will benefit you in the pushing stage. Dads, remember there is a reason why men can't have babies; we're just not that tough. The labor and delivery may seem scary, but you can do it.

Good luck and have faith in yourself.



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