

Sample Questions to Ask about Birthplaces

For more information on birthplace options, see: Pregnancy, Childbirth, and the Newborn (PCN) pages 11-15, The Simple Guide to Having a Baby (SG) page 68 or

<https://nationalpartnership.org/childbirthconnection/healthy-pregnancy/choosing-a-place-of-birth/>

Timing: Although you could do this at any time during pregnancy, we recommend that you plan to visit or call birthplaces in your first or second trimester. Typically caregivers only have privileges at certain facilities, so choosing a caregiver and birthplace goes hand in hand. If you have already chosen your caregiver, you can learn about the birthplace where they attend deliveries by asking them these questions. Before you visit, review the birthplace's web site and any written materials you have, to see which questions are answered there. Also, review the birth plan chapter to see if there are other issues you may want to ask about (PCN Chapter 7, SG Chapter 4).

Don't feel like you must answer all these questions – just focus on the ones that matter most to you.

Name of Birthplace: _____

Who can be with me:

Who can be with me during labor and birth? _____

Who can be with me during a cesarean, if one is needed? _____

What are the visitor policies after the birth? _____

Are doulas welcome? _____

Staffing:

What's ratio of patients to nurses during early labor ___ active labor ___ birth ___ after birth_____?

Are these typically maternity care nurses or floating nurses?

Are they typically registered nurses or paraprofessionals such as licensed practical nurses or nursing assistants?

Hospital routines for labor and birth:

Are birth plans encouraged? _____

What happens during a normal labor and birth in this setting? _____

What equipment is used to monitor the baby's heart rate? _____

How often is it monitored? _____

Can I walk and move around during labor? While being monitored?

Do most laboring women have intravenous (IV) fluids? _____

What can I eat and drink during labor? _____

What non-drug methods of pain relief are encouraged? _____

What comfort tools are available? (Bathtub? Birth ball?) _____

How often is the bathtub used for comfort? _____ Can I give birth in the tub? _____

What positions are suggested for the birth? _____

Is anesthesia available at all times? _____

If I have a cesarean, where will it take place? _____

After the birth:

What usually happens to a baby immediately after birth?

Will I be able to hold my baby skin to skin right away? _____

Will my baby go to the nursery or stay with me? _____

May I hold my baby for the initial assessments? _____

What if my baby is born early or has special problems? _____

How does the birthplace help mothers who want to breastfeed? _____

Are there breastfeeding specialists on staff? _____ May I call them after I go home?

Does the birthplace offer support after I go home? _____

(See also chapter 7 for additional questions that may arise as you create your birth plan.)

Note: If you discover the hospital has a standard routine that you're uncomfortable with, you can ask your caregiver if they would write orders that override it.

Questions to Ask about Out-of-Hospital Birth

If you're considering a home birth, interview your potential midwife(s). You can ask them any of the questions on the Questions to Ask about Birthplaces list above, and those on the Questions for Potential Caregivers list. Plus ask these questions:

- If health issues arise in my pregnancy, would you send me to a physician for consultation or recommend that I transfer my care? Which physicians do you work closely with?
- What supplies will I need for a home birth? Where do I get them?
- When in labor should I call you to attend my birth?
- How often do your clients transfer to the hospital during labor, and why?
- Which hospital do you transfer to, and what have your client's experiences there been like?
- What do you do to smooth the transfer process? Would you go with me to the hospital?