



Birth Prep: First Delivery

When preparing for your first labour and delivery, there is so much to consider. Preparation for birth starts much earlier than in the delivery room and the more you know prior to the delivery facilitates it to be a positive experience.

Pelvic floor physiotherapy can help you prepare for delivery. There will be three birth prep sessions scheduled in advance: at **16 weeks, 24 weeks and 37 weeks approximately**. We will discuss different topics in each session and physically prepare your body and mind for labour and delivery.

1. Your birth preferences

- Vaginal or planned caesarean?
- Epidural, pethidine, gas, or none?
- Traditional caesarean or gentle caesarean?

Gentle caesarean having a transparent divider for mom to see the baby being born and focus on getting the baby back to you as quickly as possible. Traditional caesarean having an opaque divider and waiting for OB to stitch mom up prior to baby being given to mom.

- Delayed cord clamping? Stem cell?
- If the baby needs to go to the NICU and your partner needs to go with the baby, would you like a person to be “on call” to support you while you are in recovery?

2. A supportive care provider.

- Does your care provider support both methods of delivery?
- What is their percentage rate?
- How do they support patients that would prefer a VBAC in case of future deliveries?
- When would a caesarean section be recommended?
- What medication can you have during the birth and when?
- What strategies can you implement during the different phases of labour?
- Does your partner know how they can support you during labour and are they on board?

Think of all the strategies that can be used: hands on (pressure on your hips and lower back for pain relief); hands off (sufficient water, reminding you to wee); how to answer questions to facilitate your birth preferences (so that you can focus on breathing); if your partner felt left out, how can he get involved (during prenatal appointments, equipped for asking questions, during the labour especially), know the different positions for medicated or unmedicated birth, how to minimise tearing and the interventions.

3. Mental prep for birth

- Think about birth **preferences**, not a birth plan. Write your preferences on a 1 sheet page to give to your team and be specific.

→ Think about the environment of where you'll be delivering.

Where are all the phases of labour experienced? A hospital tour can be helpful. Do they have dimmable lights? Do they have gym balls or peanut balls?

→ Find strategies to keep you in the zone.

Bathing at home or in the birthing centre, music playlists for different phases of labour, affirmations or meditations (this is more helpful when starting in pregnancy), ear plugs/headphones, breathing strategies (starting in pregnancy), and elongated breath (breath in and out for as long as possible - helpful for contractions). Understand the fear - pain cycle. What sensations feel good to you?

→ Listen to a variety of birth stories.

See the VBAC Link podcast.

<https://www.thevbaclink.com/podcast/>

Start with a variety and closer to the birth, you may choose birth stories with your preferred method of delivery.

→ Gain knowledge about labour and birth beforehand.

Be educated about all your options.

Consider purchasing "Why Did No One Tell Me?" by Emma Brockwell.

<https://www.amazon.com/Why-Did-One-Tell-Motherhood/dp/1785043366>

4. Physical preparation.

→ Understand your pelvic floor and core in pregnancy.

The anatomy of your core, protecting your abdominal muscles and pelvic floor during pregnancy.

→ Learn to connect to your pelvic floor and core in pregnancy.

Learning to release and relax the pelvic floor.

→ Prepare your body for labour.

Rest during the first stage of labour.

How much can you "let go" during the contractions? Practice physical relaxation. Knowing ALL your options will help you let go.

Experiment with different positions in labour: with or without an epidural/ peanut ball or gym ball.

Perineal massage.

Know what the baby's position is. If not in the favourable position, look up Spinning Babies.

→ Supporting you and your pelvic floor during the active phase of labour.

Types and timing of pushing.

Do you need to push when you get to 10cm dilated? Ask OB.

What positions can you push in? Ask OB. Supine, sidelying, squatting, supine with knees together.

→ Prepare for postpartum during pregnancy.

Physical, emotional and practical support.

Abdominal and perineal support. Pre-planning your support network at home. Manage your pain. Rest. Re-engage your core from day one postpartum. Boundaries with family and friends. Meals for the first 6 weeks.