

How to Take Charge of Your Labor and Delivery

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When I discovered the blog www.AtYourCervix.blogspot.com I was shocked, to say the least. A courageous Labor and Delivery Registered Nurse (who remains anonymous) blogs about what goes on behind closed doors at the maternity ward in the hospital where she works. [AtYourCervix](#) is a smart and savvy lady with more than eight years of experience in Obstetrical Nursing. She currently works in a teaching hospital in Pennsylvania where over 4000 babies are born annually. With a commitment to service and a voice of compassion for mothers, she shares her insights with us in today's guest post. Thank you [AtYourCervix](#), for your words of wisdom.

How to Take Charge of Your Labor and Delivery from guest blogger, AtYourCervix

You're having a baby. Congratulations! I'm sure you're looking forward to the day where you get to finally gaze upon the beautiful face of the little one gestating inside of your body.

Whether you receive your prenatal care with a physician or a midwife, many expecting parents plan to give birth in a hospital. But, do you know what to expect once you arrive at the hospital? Do you have a birth plan or list of preferences in place for the labor and birth — or do you plan on flying by the seat of your pants?

Planning ahead and knowing what you might expect are important to your labor and delivery experience. What are the routine procedures and protocols at the hospital where you will be delivering?

Fetal Monitoring for How Long?

Many hospitals – if not all – require you to have an initial period of fetal monitoring. Sometimes this may be as short as 15-20 minutes. Or, if anything looks suspicious on the monitor, they may require you to be on the fetal monitor for longer periods of time. This can be variable, depending on the “routine policy” of your hospital.

Getting Out of Bed

Lying down in a hospital bed, while having contractions, can be very uncomfortable for many women. My best suggestion to you is to get out of that bed as often as you can! This not only makes your labor pains more bearable, but it helps the baby move and rotate into an optimal position for labor to progress.

Unnecessary IV's

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Some hospitals require each laboring woman to have an intravenous (IV) site placed upon admission. This is simply an IV site where fluids and medications can be given during the labor process. Can you refuse or opt out of receiving an IV placed? You'll have to ask your hospital or care provider if you really need that IV placed.

Creating the Environment

Hospitals can be brightly lit, loud places to try to give birth. This can be counterproductive to your ability to relax and focus on breathing through your contractions. You can turn down (or turn off) the lights in your labor room. You might want to bring your own source of music (earbuds, CD player) to help drown out the beeps and dings of the hospital environment.

Limiting Cervical Exams



Cervical exams are done routinely in many hospitals to gauge the progress of a woman's labor. Sometimes they are done rather frequently. Keep in mind, however, that the risk for an infection increases with each cervical exam, especially when your "bag of water" is broken. As a laboring woman, you do have the right to question frequent cervical checks (as well as virtually every other procedure!) done while in the hospital. It never hurts to ask questions about whether something is necessary or not.

Dads: what can you do to help Mom?

Go to childbirth classes together. Consider it a date night before the baby arrives. You will help learn valuable techniques and supportive measures for labor and birth. Make sure you talk with your partner before labor begins about what her goals are: does she want to avoid an epidural? Is she open to pain medication or does she want to have a natural childbirth? What can you do to help her achieve her goals?

Some ideas for Dad to help Mom: suggesting a change in her position or movement every 15-30 minutes, walking in the room or the hallway, use of tub or shower, massage (if she wants you to touch her – some women don't like being touched in labor), playing her favorite soothing music, getting her juice or other liquids to drink, keeping her supplied with ice chips, reminding her of what a great job she's doing, as well as reminding her to keep her bladder empty.

A positive, encouraging partner can be priceless to a laboring woman!

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