

Things your baby needs

Here are some things you may want to get ready for your baby before you bring him home.

Clothes and other items

- Five to seven undershirts
- Six to eight sleepers
- Four to six pairs of socks or booties
- One or two caps
- Four to six receiving blankets
- Ten burp cloths

Feeding supplies

- Bottles or bags to store pumped breast milk
- Bottles for feeding pumped breast milk
- Two to three bibs

Diapering and bathing supplies

- Three or four dozen newborn-size disposable diapers or three to five dozen cloth diapers and four diaper covers
- Diaper wipes or cotton balls
- Diaper rash cream
- Waterproof changing pad
- Alcohol wipes for umbilical cord care
- Petroleum jelly for a boy's penis if he has a circumcision
- Cotton balls
- Baby soap and shampoo
- Baby washcloths and towels
- Nail clippers
- Baby bathtub

Furniture, bedding and equipment

- A rear-facing car seat that fits your car and is installed correctly. For more information about car seats, go to: safecar.gov
- Crib, cradle or bassinet
- Mattress, mattress cover, fitted sheets
- Stroller



Watch videos on how to have a healthy pregnancy at: marchofdimes.org/videos

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Hospital bag checklist

You may want to bring:

- ✓ Socks to keep your feet warm
- ✓ A robe and slippers
- ✓ A few nightgowns or pajamas, or T-shirts and sweat pants
- ✓ Loose-fitting T-shirts or nursing bras, if you're breastfeeding
- ✓ Several pairs of underpants
- ✓ Washcloths and towels
- ✓ Toiletries such as soap, shampoo, a toothbrush and toothpaste
- ✓ Hairbrush/hairstyling equipment
- ✓ Loose-fitting or maternity clothes to wear home

Plus these things for your baby:

- ✓ Clothes to wear home, including an undershirt, cap and socks
- ✓ A warm blanket if it's cold outside
- ✓ If you're driving your baby home, a rear-facing car seat that fits your car and is installed correctly. For more information about car seats, go to:

safercar.gov

You also may want to have:

- ✓ Lotions and equipment for massage
- ✓ Lip balm
- ✓ Special music for relaxation
- ✓ Cell phone and charger
- ✓ A list of phone numbers for people you want to call when the baby is born
- ✓ Coins, a prepaid phone card or a calling card
- ✓ Cosmetics
- ✓ Camera or video camera
- ✓ Books or magazines
- ✓ Books or brochures about breastfeeding or newborn care

Hospitals give you gowns to wear during labor and birth. They also may offer some of the items listed above, so check to see exactly what you need to bring with you.



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Labor and birth

What are the signs of labor?

- You may have strong and regular contractions. A contraction is when the muscles of the uterus tighten up like a fist and then relax. Contractions help push the baby out.
- Your contractions come about 5 to 10 minutes apart.
- Your contractions are so strong that you can't walk or talk during them.
- Your water breaks. Your baby has been growing in amniotic fluid (bag of waters) in the uterus. When the bag of waters breaks, some women feel a big rush of water. Others just feel a trickle.

If you think you may be in labor, call your health care provider, no matter what time of day or night.

What are the three ways you can have your baby?

1. **Vaginal birth** — This is the way most babies are born. During vaginal birth, your uterus contracts to help push the baby out through your vagina.
2. **Cesarean birth** (also called c-section) — For some women and babies, a c-section is safer than vaginal birth. You and your provider may plan to have a c-section. Or you may need to have an emergency (unplanned) c-section because of a problem that happens during pregnancy. During a c-section, your doctor makes a cut in your belly and uterus and takes the baby out through this opening.
3. **VBAC** — This stands for “vaginal birth after cesarean.” If you've already had a c-section, you may be able to have a

vaginal birth with your next baby. If you had a c-section in the past and want to have a vaginal birth, talk to your provider.

What are some reasons why you may need to have a c-section?

You should have a c-section only if there are medical reasons for it. You may need to have a c-section if:

- You've already had a c-section or other surgeries on your uterus.
- Your baby is too big to pass safely through the vagina.
- The baby is in a breech position (buttocks or feet first) or a transverse position (shoulder first). The best position for a baby is head first.
- There are problems with the placenta (the organ that nourishes the baby in the womb). Placental problems can cause dangerous bleeding during vaginal birth.
- Labor is too slow or stops.
- You have umbilical cord prolapse (the umbilical cord slips into the vagina, where it could be squeezed or flattened during vaginal birth).
- You have an infection, like HIV or genital herpes. You can pass some infections to your baby during vaginal birth.
- The baby shows signs of stress during labor, such as having a slow heart rate.



watch & learn

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What is inducing labor?

Inducing labor is when a provider gives you medicine to make you start labor. Your labor should be induced only if there are medical reasons for it. Your provider may induce your labor if:

- You are past your due date.
- The baby's growth or movement has slowed a lot.
- The placenta is no longer working correctly.
- Amniotic fluid levels are low.
- Your water breaks before labor is ready to start.
- The baby is getting too big.
- You have diabetes and have arrived at your due date.
- You have preeclampsia or another illness that affects your health or the health of your baby.
- The baby has Rh disease, which is caused by an incompatibility between your blood and the baby's blood.

What are the three stages of childbirth?

1. **Labor** — This stage begins when you have regular contractions that open (dilate) your cervix. This stage lasts until the cervix is fully opened to 10 centimeters. This stage can occur over several days with no noticeable contractions, or it can happen in just a few hours with very clear contractions. It's different for every woman.
2. **Birth** — This stage begins when the cervix is fully open and ends with the baby's birth. This stage usually lasts 1 to 2 hours, but many women have shorter or longer experiences. It's different for every woman.
3. **Delivery of the placenta** — This stage begins immediately after the baby's birth and ends with the delivery of the placenta. This stage usually lasts between 10 minutes and 1 hour.

What kinds of medicines can help with labor pain?

- **Epidural** — This is the most popular and effective kind of pain relief for labor. You get a small needle with a tube attached placed in your lower back. Medicine goes through the tube while you're in labor. It numbs your lower body so you can't feel the pain from your contractions. The medicine doesn't make you go to sleep, so you can be awake when your baby is born.
- **Spinal block** — A spinal block is a shot you get in your lower back that numbs your lower body. It's good for fast pain relief, but it only lasts for 1 to 2 hours. You may have a spinal block with an epidural if you need quick pain relief.
- **Narcotics** — A narcotic is a drug that changes how you feel pain. You can get a narcotic in a shot or through an IV. Narcotics might not work as well as an epidural. Also, they might make you sleepy or feel sick to your stomach. They're used most often to help at the beginning of labor. If they're used late in labor, they may cause the baby to move slowly and have trouble breathing.

What are other ways to help cope with labor pain?

You may not want to use medicine to help with labor pain. This is called natural childbirth. If you want to have natural childbirth, you can use methods like these to help cope with labor pain. It's also OK to use these methods along with medicine, if you want:

- **A support person** — You may want to have a special support person with you during labor, such as your partner, the baby's father, a family member or a friend. Your support person can help you remember how to breathe and relax. The person also can comfort you and cheer you on through labor.

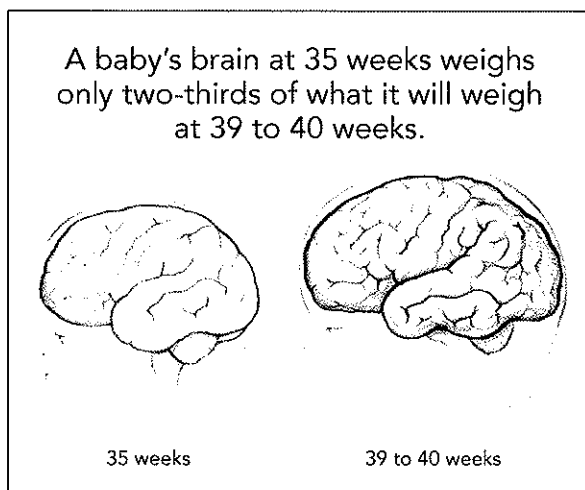
- **A doula** — A doula is like a coach who has special training in helping with labor. Tell your provider if you think you want to hire a doula.
- **Water therapy** — Taking a bath in warm water may help ease labor pain. The hospital may have soaking tubs made just for pregnant women.
- **Changing positions** — Changing how you're sitting or lying down may help ease labor pain. You may want to sit in a chair or on a birthing ball (a big rubber ball). Or you may want to squat or get down on your hands and knees.
- **Breathing, visualization and relaxation** — You can use the breathing, visualization and relaxation techniques you learned in these sessions or in childbirth classes to help you cope with labor pain.

Why the last weeks of pregnancy count

If your pregnancy is healthy, it's best to stay pregnant for at least 39 weeks.

Lots of important things are happening to your baby in the last few weeks of pregnancy:

- Important organs, like your baby's brain, lungs and liver, are still developing and growing.



- Your baby's eyes and ears are still developing too. Babies born too early are more likely to have vision and hearing problems later in life.
- Your baby is still learning to suck and swallow. Babies born early sometimes can't do these things.

If your pregnancy is healthy, wait for labor to begin on its own. If you choose to induce labor in a healthy pregnancy, talk to your health care provider about waiting until you're full term at 39 weeks. Give your baby the time he needs to develop before he's born. Inducing labor or having a c-section before 39 weeks should only be for medical reasons.

Ask these questions if you and your provider talk about scheduling your baby's birth:

- **If your provider recommends you give birth before 39 weeks**
 - Is there a problem with my health or the health of my baby that may make me need to have my baby early?
 - Can I wait to have my baby until I'm closer to 39 weeks?
- **About inducing labor**
 - Why do you need to induce my labor?
 - How will you induce my labor?
 - Will inducing labor increase the chance that I'll need to have a c-section?
- **About c-section**
 - Why do I need to have a c-section?
 - What problems can a c-section cause for me and my baby?
 - Can I have a vaginal birth in my future pregnancies?



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Birth plan

Share your answers to these questions with your health care provider, with staff at the hospital or birthing center, and with your partner or other support people. Go to marchofdimes.org/birthplan for a birth plan you can fill out and save online.

Name _____

1. My health care provider's contact information:

Name _____

Phone # _____

2. Where do I plan to have my baby?

3. Who is my primary support person during labor and birth?

Name _____

Phone _____

This person is:

- My partner My baby's father
- My family My friend
- Clergy Doula

My baby's due date _____

4. Who else do I want with me during labor and birth?

Name _____

Phone # _____

This person is:

- My partner My baby's father
- My family My friend
- Clergy Doula

Name _____

Phone # _____

This person is:

- My partner My baby's father
- My family My friend
- Clergy Doula



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5. What kind of support do I want during labor?

- Help with breathing
- Help working through contractions
- Massage
- Moving around
- Other

6. Do I want to be able to move around during labor?

- Yes
- No

7. What position(s) do I want to be in for my labor?

- Lying down
- Sitting
- Standing
- Moving around
- Other

8. What kind of drugs, if any, do I want to help with labor pain?

9. Who do I want to cut the umbilical cord?

10. Do I want to have my baby's umbilical cord blood saved?

- Yes
- No

11. Do I want my baby with me at all times after birth? Or is it OK for my baby to spend time in the nursery?

- Stay with me at all times
- OK to stay in nursery

12. Do I want to breastfeed my baby?

- Yes
- No

13. If my baby is a boy, do I want to have him circumcised?

- Yes
- No

14. Are there special traditions I want to take place in the delivery room?

- Yes
- No

Describe _____

15. If there are any problems with me or with the baby, do I want to be told first, or do I want my support person told first?

- Tell me first.
- Tell my support person first.

16. Are there other issues the hospital or birthing center staff should know about me or my baby's birth?

- Yes
- No

Describe _____

17. My baby's health care provider's contact information:

Name _____

Phone # _____