

How To Prepare for Child Birth

By Curt Hagedorn

According to most women, the experience – not to say pain right up front – of childbirth recedes in the memory after the fact so that only the warm and positive feelings of motherhood remain. While this may be true, there are some things you can do to prepare yourself for the birth of your child, some of which may not have occurred to you. Of course, like most parents these days, you probably have read a book or two and have taken a class or two on what to do and who should participate. Here are some other things to do you might not have thought of to help you get through your baby's birthday.

- Talk to the hospital, midwife or birthing consultant in advance about what you need and what is available. Hospitals have become somewhat more flexible both in what they offer to expectant mothers and what they'll allow in the room during the actual delivery. While this doesn't mean you can smoke cigs and drink bourbon, it does mean that there may be special birthing rooms which are less "clinical" looking than hospital rooms, if you ask in advance you may be able to have your partner and your sister and your mother in the room with you, and so on. Remember that tolerance goes both ways, however, so that if there happen to be complications or hospital staff find it necessary to clear the room, your friends and family should obey instructions immediately and without protest. This is also the time to discuss any unusual procedures – some hospitals may offer a water birth, which is perceived to be less traumatic, for example – or whether or not you are interested in natural childbirth, would like to be given drugs, what kind and so forth are all things you should know well in advance of the day.
- Bring some of your favorite things. Birthing consultants often recommend bringing a picture or object along for you to focus on during the delivery. This can pretty much be anything you want, for example, you might want to focus your energy on a photo of your husband, a previous child or parent, or you might want to find a photo that takes your mind off the whole thing, like one of Brad Pitt. If you have a blanket or throw from your own bed, a secret stuffed animal left over from childhood, your own pajamas – anything that makes you more comfortable.
- Make it a party. Birthing consultants also recommend that you bring some of your favorite snacks along to nibble on – doctors will tell you when and whether it is advisable to eat anything more than the traditional ice chips you always see on TV. It's also recommended that you bring along your favorite music – soothing, energizing, whatever you want it to be though, again, be considerate and if doctors ask you to turn it down or

- off – or bring a set of headphones, though again remember you may need to hear instructions from the doctor or midwife.
- Though it may not mean much to some mothers, if you've been longing for a glass of wine since you became pregnant, many doctors will allow a small amount wine toward the final few days of pregnancy, particularly if you've been experiencing problems sleeping or a number of "false" labors. Make sure you check with your doctor to see under what cases and during what time frames this might be allowed.
 - One of the biggest trends these days, and of course the ultimate in "preparing" for childbirth, is the planned cesarean section. In this case, either the doctors are already certain that you need a cesarean because of the position of the baby in the womb, or other complications or you simply must deliver the baby on a certain timetable for other reasons. You basically set the day you wish to have your baby, and go into the hospital for a cesarean where the child is basically "removed." Though cesarean operations have saved lives and are practiced on a regular basis, be advised that a cesarean section is major surgery, with all of it's attendant risks and corresponding long recovery period. Many midwives and birthing consultants recommend exploring all possible avenues and having a cesarean be the last resort.