



Labor and Delivery: My Baby is Almost Here!

After months of waiting, the birth of your baby is near. Here is what you can expect from the start of labor to the first days and weeks with your new baby.



Vocabulary

- Birth Plan
- Cesarean Section
- Postpartum Depression
- Twins, triplets, etc.
- Placenta
- Umbilical Cord

Signs of Labor

Labor is the process of giving birth to your baby. No one can predict exactly when it will begin. It is normal for labor to start as early as three weeks before your due date. It may start as late as two weeks after it. The following signs mean that labor is not far away:

- **Lightening:** Your baby's head drops down into your pelvis. Your belly may look lower. It might be easier to breathe. Your baby no longer crowds your lungs. You may feel an increased need to urinate. Your baby is pressing on your bladder. This symptom can occur from a few weeks to a few hours before labor begins.
- **Bloody show:** You may notice a blood-tinged or brownish discharge. It means that the mucus plug that sealed off the womb has broken. This can occur days before or at the beginning of labor.
- **Diarrhea: Frequent** loose stools may mean labor will begin soon.
- **Water breaking:** Fluid leaking from the vagina means that the watery sac your baby was in has broken. This can occur before labor starts or during labor. Most women go into labor within 24 hours after their water breaks. If labor does not start during this period, doctors may **induce** labor – make it start with medicine.
- **Contractions:** Contractions are muscle movements in your uterus. They move your baby out of your body. They often feel like strong cramps. If your contractions occur more often than every 10 minutes, it probably means that labor has begun.

Stages of Labor

Labor is divided into three stages:

Stage 1. In this stage of labor, your cervix will open. The cervix is at the lower end of the uterus. It must open to allow your baby to move out. This stage of labor is often the longest. Your contractions will become more regular. They are helping your cervix to open, so that it can stretch. Contractions should not be too uncomfortable at this point. If your contractions happen on a regular pattern, your cervix will be checked to see how open it is. If your cervix is dilated 3 or 4 centimeters, you will be admitted to the hospital. You will have frequent pelvic exams to see how much the cervix has opened. As your cervix opens more, contractions will become stronger and more painful. They will happen more often. Usually they will happen every three to four minutes. You may feel a strong urge to push, but do not. You must wait until your cervix is completely open.

Stage 2. Your cervix is completely open. At this point, your doctor will give you the OK to push. Your pushing, along with the force of your contractions, will move your baby through the birth canal. The soft spots on your baby's head allow it to fit through the canal. Your baby's head "crowns" when the widest part of it reaches the vaginal opening. As soon as your baby's head comes out, your doctor will suction amniotic fluid, blood, and mucus from



his or her nose and mouth. You will continue to push to help the baby's shoulders and body come out. Once your baby is delivered, the umbilical cord is cut. Oxygen and food traveled from you to your baby through the umbilical cord. Once the baby is out of your body, it is no longer needed.

Stage 3. You may think that labor is finished once your baby is born. It is not. You have one more thing to do. You must also push out the placenta. The placenta is the organ that nourished your baby inside the womb. That means more pushing and some contractions. Each woman and each labor is different. The amount of time spent in each stage of labor will be different from woman to woman. If this is your first pregnancy, labor and delivery usually last about 12 to 14 hours. The process is usually shorter for pregnancies that follow later.

Cesarean birth

Cesarean delivery, also called C-section, is surgery to deliver a baby. A C-section is done for reasons of safety or health. Ask your healthcare provider for more information on C-sections.

If a cesarean section has been recommended for you, find out all the facts first. Ask these questions, "Why do I need it?" "What will happen if I don't have it done?" "What are the risks to me and my baby if I have it done?"

Pain Treatments

The amount of time in labor varies. The amount of pain women experience is different too. Some women can manage their pain with breathing. Others use techniques learned in childbirth classes.

Some of the more commonly used pain-relief methods include:

Medications

Several drugs are used to help ease the pain of labor and delivery. They are generally safe for the mother and baby. But, they can have side effects. There are two types of pain drugs: analgesics and anesthetics.

Analgesics relieve pain. During labor, they may be given by injection. You should still be able to move your muscles and feel something. A possible side effect might be headaches. They might also cause decreased blood pressure which can slow the baby's heart rate.

Anesthesia blocks all feeling. It also blocks muscle movement. The appropriate form of anesthesia will depend on your health, and your baby's health. It will also depend on whether or not there are any needs that you or your baby have during your delivery.

Non-Drug Options

These include relaxation and breathing exercises, and changing positions to get more comfortable during labor. Even if you choose non-drug pain relief in the beginning, you can still ask for pain medications any time during your delivery.

What to Expect After Delivery

Your body went through many changes before birth. It will go through changes as you recover from childbirth. The birth of a baby stresses your body. Common things that happen after child birth are:

- **Pain at the end of the birth canal:** Sometimes, a doctor may make a cut between the vagina and the anus to help deliver the baby or prevent tearing. If this was done, or the area was torn during birth, walking, sitting, coughing, or sneezing may be painful for a few days.
- **Sore breasts:** Your breasts may be swollen, hard, and painful for several days. Your nipples may also be sore.
- **Hot and cold flashes:** After your baby's birth, your body must adjust to changes in hormone levels. These changes can cause you to feel very hot one minute and freezing cold the next.
- **"After pains":** After giving birth, you will continue to experience contractions for a few days. Your uterus is returning to its normal size. You may notice contractions most while your baby is nursing.

- **Vaginal discharge:** After birth, you will experience a discharge heavier than a regular period. Within two months, the discharge will fade in color to white or yellow. Then it will stop entirely.
- **“Baby blues”:** Changes in hormones and a lack of sleep can cause emotional changes for many new mothers. They may feel angry or sad in the days or weeks after their baby is born. These feelings should pass over time. Some women experience something more serious. It is called postpartum depression. If these emotions are strong and last longer than a few weeks, call your doctor right away.

Vocabulary & Definitions

Birth Plan:	A birth plan is a way for you to communicate your wishes to the health care provider who cares for you in labor. It tells them about the type of labor and birth you'd like to have. It also tells them what you want to happen, and what you want to avoid. (A birth plan needs to be flexible. It needs to admit that labor may not go according to plan. Make a plan which includes options if complications arise during your labor.)
Cesarean Section:	A cesarean section is the delivery of a baby through a cut (incision) in the mother's belly and uterus. It is often called a C-section.
Postpartum Depression:	Postpartum depression is a serious illness that can occur in the first few months after childbirth. It also can happen after miscarriage and stillbirth. Postpartum depression can make you feel very sad, hopeless, and worthless. You may have trouble caring for and bonding with your baby. (Please explain to the students: If they have the signs of postpartum depression to immediately contact their health care provider.)
Twins, triplets, etc.:	More than one baby.
Placenta:	The placenta is an organ that connects the developing fetus to the uterine wall. It allows the baby to receive nutrients and eliminate waste. It also allows gas exchange via the mother's blood supply.
Umbilical Cord:	The umbilical cord may be called the birth cord. It is the connecting cord from the developing baby to the placenta.

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Lesson Plan

Purpose of lesson: to recognize the signs of labor and stages and types of delivery (vaginal and Cesarean)

Essential question: How will I know when I am in labor and what can I expect during delivery?

Goals:

- Students will be able to discuss the signs and stages of labor and gain an understanding of a typical delivery
- Students will write in a journal or draw a picture on what they think it will be like to give birth (or for their spouse/mate to give birth). The writing or drawing will include a mini “birth plan.” Students will record options such as: where they would like to deliver, who they would like to have present during delivery, and whether they would like to deliver with or without medication. Also to be included in the journaling activity are any questions or concerns that they might have around labor and delivery.
- Students will discuss questions related to labor and delivery to ask of their doctor or midwife

Differentiated Instruction:

- All student material will be bilingual
- Students will receive verbal and written directions
- Students will view a sample journal entry and poster (instructor will prepare)
- Students will review the “Sample” Birth Plan
- Students will leave with their journals or pictures, desired “birth plan” and questions to ask doctor, midwife or healthcare professional

NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR: To accommodate the literacy levels and educational experiences of the participants, oral and/or group activities may be substituted for reading, writing, skills practice, and assessments.

*****NOTE*****

Due to the nature of the information provided in this lesson, it is necessary that it be taught exactly as provided without the addition of instructor anecdotes or personal experiences. Instructors should seek guidance from healthcare professionals if questions arise about the information in the lesson.

Optional equipment

- Laptop with internet access
- DVD Player
- Screen or something to display video on

Materials needed

- Chalkboard or dry erase board with chalk/markers
- Journals or notebooks
- Poster or drawing paper (for those who will participate by drawing)
- Markers/Crayons
- Pre- and post-assessment handouts
- Activity Directions
- Health magazines and/or pregnancy magazines with articles on labor and delivery in appropriate language
- Flyers/pamphlets on labor and delivery from local health department in appropriate language

Elements	Activities	Notes
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the topic. Ask the students the question. Time: 10 minutes • Distribute the Pre-Assessment. Time: 5-10 minutes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Why do you think it is important to know about labor and delivery?” 2. Write individual answers on the board. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let student finish the assessment. • Ask for volunteers to share some answers. • Have the students keep their assessment.
Instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute and read the student lesson, Labor and Delivery... “My Baby Is Almost Here!” together. Time: 30 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instructor will explain the boldfaced words as they appear.

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Lesson Plan

Elements	Activities	Notes
Instructions	<p>***NOTE*** Due to the amount of important information in the lesson, it may take additional time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can have the choice to either write in a journal or draw a picture or poster. Time: 15 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instructor will distribute the materials, and explain the directions. The instructor will show examples of both completed journal entries, drawings on posters/drawing paper, and review the birth plan. The end product will illustrate the student's understanding of what to expect during labor and delivery, and also yield a mini "birth plan" outlining the student's desired labor and delivery.
Concept Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Post-Assessments Time: 5-10 minutes Handouts Time: 5 minutes 	<p>If you cannot answer a question, please refer the student to their healthcare professional or research the facts to report to the student.</p>
Optional activities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To expand the information previously presented, search the internet for a video on labor and delivery in the appropriate language. Be sure to preview the video before presenting it to the students. If time is available, invite a healthcare professional to instruct the class. 		

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Activity

Activity

Purpose: To create a journal entry or poster illustrating students understanding of labor and delivery and develop a mini-birth plan.

Time: 30 minutes (Additional time may be necessary.)

Students are given directions (written and verbally) and provided all the material needed.

1. Explain to students that they are going to create a journal entry or poster illustrating:
 - What to expect during labor and delivery, and
 - Options they choose for their birth plan.

Students may refer to the instructor-led discussion on labor and delivery or other instructor identified appropriate materials.

2. Students will share their birth plan with healthcare provider.

Below are ideas for making your wants and needs known during labor and delivery. You may choose to use some or all of these options. You may also add your own ideas. Be sure to include your personal information. Be sure to share the plan with your doctor.

“Sample” Birth Plan

Patient’s Name: _____ **Due Date:** _____

Partner’s Name: _____ **Doctor’s Name:** _____

I would like:

- my _____ (partner, parents, other) present during labor
- to move around during labor.
- to wear my own clothes during labor.
- to bring music to be played during labor.
- to use _____ (medication, breathing techniques, nothing) for pain relief.
- to push _____ (as directed, when I feel the need).
- to hold the baby _____ (right after delivery, after weighing, etc.).
- to _____ (breastfeed, bottle feed) my baby.
- the baby to stay in my room _____ (all the time, during the day, when I request).
- my partner to _____ (have unlimited visiting, sleep in my room).