



MY BIRTH PREFERENCES

BEFORE | DURING | AFTER

BEFORE LABOUR | BIRTH COMPANIONS | BIRTH ENVIRONMENT
INDUCTION | PAIN RELIEF | MONITORING | SECOND STAGE
DELIVERY | CESAREAN | THIRD STAGE | NEWBORN

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A LETTER TO PARENTS

Before you complete this birth plan, it is important to understand that how you became a parent is not nearly as important than the fact that you did. That being said, the birth experience itself can influence both parent and child on a physical and emotional level and the importance thereof should not be underestimated.

Taking ownership of your birth experience can be hugely rewarding and empowering – whether natural or C-Section. That does, however, not mean that you should not seek professional advice, guidance & skill in making and implementing your choices. It also does not mean you can plan and control everything about your birth – it would be ignorant to think or suggest that. It simply means participating in your own birth and decisions by understanding what the options are and knowing your own preferences. It is deciding what is important to you and your partner and what is not.

A birth plan is a written record of what you want to happen with you and your baby before, during and immediately after birth and allows for better communication regarding your needs and concerns. The term 'Birth Preferences' is preferable as it acknowledges that every step can't be controlled and that you need to be flexible within your choices.

A birth plan encourages you to think about, explore and discuss the options available to you, before you go into labour. It also allows you to work towards and prepare for the birth you want. Every birth plan is unique and personal and will depend on what your preferences, your medical history, as well as what is available to you in terms of maternal care.

There are many options and drawing up a plan without guidance can be daunting. This birth plan template, developed by Love Alda Birth Photographer and Mentor, in consultation with other birth professionals, including doulas, gynecologists and midwives, serves as a practical guide to assist parents in compiling a simple, customised plan of their own. It highlights the different birth choices in a logical format and covers before labour, birth companions, birth environment, induction, pain management, second stage labour, C-Sections, delivery and much more! It encourages couples to learn about ALL the options and then decide what is important to them so that they will end up with a clear, simple and personalised document.

Completing your plan is easy:

1. Work through all the the different birth choices and decide which choices are important to you (not all of them have to be important)
2. Summarise your preferences, in your own words in the sections provided

IMPORTANT NOTES:

This birth plan was developed in consultation with gynecologists, midwives, doulas and other birth professionals. It does not however endorse any specific views or choices on birth and parents are encourage to seek professional advice regarding their choices. This plan serves only as a guideline to shape your birth experience as far as possible and health care providers may deviate from it if medically required to. Please obtain professional advice so that you may make informed birth choices that are best suited to your situation. Note that certain hospitals / birth professionals may have their own regulations and protocols in place when it comes to certain procedures and decisions. It is important that you are aware of these when planning your birth. - your primary care giver would be able to answer questions in this regard.

MY BIRTH PLAN

Estimated Date of Birth: / / Baby/Babies' Name/s:

Mother's Name: Father's Name:

Phone:

Email:

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER: SUPPORTING BIRTH PROFESSIONALS:

Gynecologist: Doula / Supporting Private Midwife:

Private Midwife: Birth Photographer:

DELIVERY PREFERENCE: ☐ Natural ☐ C-Section ☐ VBAC

☐ My birth will be led by my Private Midwife with pre-arranged Gynecologist / Hospital back-up:

☐ My birth will be lead by my Gynecologist:

Location of Birth:

Address:

City:

Unless my baby or myself is in danger (in which case my primary Health Care Provider can act immediatley), I want the following person to be informed of procedures and make decisions on my behalf if I am not able to:

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1. BEFORE LABOUR PREFERENCES:

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2. BIRTH COMPANION PREFERENCES:

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3. BIRTH ENVIRONMENT PREFERENCES:

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4. PAIN MANAGEMENT PREFERENCES:

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5. SECOND STAGE LABOUR:

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MY BIRTH PLAN

6. DELIVERY:

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7. C-SECTION:

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8. THIRD STAGE / JUST AFTER BABY IS BORN:

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9. MY BABY:

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10. OTHER:

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POSSIBLE BIRTH CHOICES

1. BEFORE LABOUR

1.1 If you and your baby are healthy and you plan on having a natural birth, the following choices may apply if you pass your due date:

- a) To wait 10 - 14 days before inducing labour
- b) To have no restrictions on the duration of their pregnancy
- c) To induce

1.2 If you go into labour and are admitted to hospital the following choices may apply (not relevant in home births):

- a) To stay in hospital, regardless of dilation
- b) To go home if your are dilated less than 4cm and return later

2. BIRTH COMPANIONS

The following birth companions (over and above my Primary Health Care Provider) may be requested to be present at and support you during birth (note that these options also depends on the health care provider of choice):

- a) Husband / Partner
- b) Siblings (will not be allowed in theatre)
- c) Immediate Adult Family Member
- d) Doula
- e) Supporting Midwife
- f) Professional Birth Photographer (SABPA Registered)

3. ENVIRONMENT

The following are possible birth equipment choices (find out what your location of choice have available - the rest can possibly rented from reputable companies such as Birth Options):

- a) a birthing bed
- b) a birthing ball
- c) a birthing tub, pool / shower
- d) a birthing stool

Other birth environment choices to consider:

- a) lighting (a professional birth photographer can capture your birth without using a flash)
- b) silence / music / birth affirmations
- c) clothes (hospital gown or own clothes)
- d) fragrance / aromatherapy

POSSIBLE BIRTH CHOICES

3. INDUCTION (not relevant to C-Section)

3.1 Natural induction options:

- a) evening primrose
- b) walking
- c) herbs
- d) accupuncture
- e) accupressure
- f) reflexology
- g) other

3.2 If medical induction becomes necessary, the following choices can be considered:

- a) stripping membranes
- b) prostaglandin gels
- c) pitocin
- d) rupturing membranes

4. PAIN MANAGEMENT DURING LABOUR (not relevant to C-Section)

Some women prefer that pain or pain relief is not mentioned unless they refer to it themselves. The following are pain relief options for labouring women (pain relief options for after a C-Section can nalso be discussed with your health care provider):

- a) ice chips
- b) reflexology
- c) acupressure
- d) visualisation
- e) breathing techniques
- f) light therapy
- g) massage with oils
- h) Entonox gas
- i) Pethidine injection*
- j) Epidural*
- k) get into water (discuss timing of this with your healthcare provider)

*note that once labour has progressed past a certain point, these can't be administered

5. MONITORING BABY DURING LABOUR (not relevant to C-Section)

You may prefer continues fetal monitoring or for baby to be monitored inermittedly to allow for as much mobility as possible during labour.

6. SECOND STAGE LABOUR

6.1 The following are choice or options when it comes to pushing:

- a) no time limit on pushing if baby and parent are in no danger
- b) medical intervention / assistance if pushing for a while with no success

POSSIBLE BIRTH CHOICES

6.2 The following positions may be considered during second stage labour:

- a) squatting
- b) classic semi-recline
- c) hands and knees
- d) standing upright
- e) side lying
- f) whatever feels right at the time

6.3 Enema options:

- a) ask for an enema if / when you feel you need one
- b) receive an enema upon being admitted / before second stage labour
- c) you may decide not to have an enema administered

6.4 Episiotomy options:

- a) you may prefer to have an episiotomy to prevent tearing
- b) you may prefer not to have an episiotomy and risk tearing unless you require delivery assistance

7. DELIVERY (not relevant to C-Section)

7.1 When the time comes to push (or breathe your baby out) you might want to do so instinctively and not be told how or when to push or you might want someone to tell you when and how to push.

7.2 When receiving your baby the following choices might be important to you:

- a) touching your baby's head as it crowns
- b) catching your baby and pulling it onto your abdomen as it is born
- c) allowing your partner to catch your baby
- d) allowing your doctor or midwife to catch your baby
- e) watch your baby crown in a mirror

8. C-SECTION

The following choices / options might be important to you when it comes to a C-Section:

- a) you might want to remain conscious during the procedure (in a small amount of cases this is not possible)
- b) you might like for your baby to be shown to you immediately after it's born
- c) you might want to discuss anesthesia and pain management options with your anethetist
- d) you might prefer a low transverse incision on your abdomen and uterus to allow for a possible future VBAC
- e) you might prefer that those present do not engage in small talk with others during your operation
- f) you might want music to be played in theatre
- g) you might opt for a 'gentle c-section' and ask for the dimming of lights and / or for the drapes to be dropped (some hospitals offer see-through drapes so as to not compromise on hygiene)

POSSIBLE BIRTH CHOICES

9. THIRD STAGE LABOUR / IMMEDIATELY AFTER BABY IS BORN (both natural & C-Section)

The following choices / options might be important to you when it comes to third stage labour:

- a) you might want to wait for the umbilical cord to stop pulsating before it is clamped
- b) you might want your partner to cut the umbilical cord (with a c-section the doctor cuts the cord whilst the baby is still in the sterile area - after that the partner can cut the rest of the cord)
- c) you might consider Oxytocin for the management of the third stage
- d) you might like to bank your baby's cord blood and make arrangements for this procedure prior to the birth
- e) you might like the option of keeping the placenta
- f) you might prefer and make arrangements for a Lotus birth (umbilical nonseverance)

10. MY NEWBORN (both natural & C-Section)

The following choices / options might be important to you when it comes to your newborn:

- a) As long as your baby is healthy, you might like for your baby to be placed skin-to-skin with a with a warm towel over it
- b) You might prefer that you and your baby are not separated until after your baby successfully breastfed
- c) You might wish for your baby to breastfeed and bond for at least an hour before routine procedures are done on your baby
- d) If you are not able to bond immediately, you might wish for your partner to be the baby's constant source of attention with skin-to-skin contact until you are able to hold your baby

10.1 If you've had a C-Section:

- a) you might wish for your baby to stay with you in recovery if both baby and you are healthy
- b) you might wish for your baby to be taken to the nursery with your partner

10.2 Newborn Procedures:

- a) If your baby has any problems, you might wish for your partner to be present with the baby at all times, if possible
- b) You might wish to have routine newborn procedures delayed until bonding and breastfeeding have occurred
- c) You might wish for newborn routine procedures to be performed in your presence
- d) You might wish for all newborn procedures to be performed right away

10.3 Vitamin K:

- a) You might prefer for your baby to receive a routine injection of vitamin K immediately after birth
- b) You might wish to delay the administration of vitamin K up to 1 hour after birth, after breastfeeding and bonding unless medically necessary
- c) You might prefer that only the orally administered vitamin K be given to your baby
- d) You might not want for vitamin K to be administered to your baby and you are willing to sign a formal waiver if need be

10.4 Immunizations:

- a) You may prefer for any immunizations to be postponed to a later time (but within government regulations)
- b) You may be happy for your baby to be immunized according to normal procedures

POSSIBLE BIRTH CHOICES

10.5 Bathing Baby:

- a) You might want to only bathe your baby after you've have had time to bond / you can do so yourself
- b) You might prefer that your baby is not bathed

10.6 Circumcision:

- a) You may not want your baby to be circumcised
- b) You may prefer for your baby ito be circumcised

10.7 Feedings:

- a) You may wish to exclusively breastfeed your baby
- b) You might want to combine breastfeeding and formula feeding
- c) You may wish to see a lactation consultant as soon as possible for further recommendations and guidance
- d) You may not want for any or all of the following to be offered to your baby without consent:
 - formula
 - pacifiers
 - artificial nipples
 - sugar water

10.8 In-hospital Routine:

- a) You may prefer full rooming in, no separation, no exceptions, unless your baby is sick or in NICU
- b) You may prefer to delay rooming in until you have had time to rest
- c) You may request to have your baby sent to the nursery at night so that you can rest

A NOTE FROM ALDA SMITH AUTHOR OF THIS BIRTH PLAN AND ONE OF CAPE TOWN'S FOREMOST BIRTH PHOTOGRAPHERS & MENTORS:

As a mother of three and Co-Founder of the South African Birth Photographers Association (SABPA), I have a heart for the birth environment and a deep respect for the privacy and choices of my birth clients.

It was with the birth of my first child that I realised how ill-informed parents often are when it comes to birh choices and after spending many hours as professional birth photographer with mothers giving birth, I decided to develop this birth plan template under the guidance of some highly skilled, talented and knowledgeable health care providers.

As professional birth photographer my goal is to provide you with breathtaking maternity, birth & newborn imagery to kindle & share memories of a life-changing time that goes by too quickly. To me birth photography is not only about capturing the actual moment of birth, but rather the many moments of connection and love that will tell a story one day.

To find out more visit www.lovealda.com

I wish you beautiful, safe births and incredible birth stories and memories.

Alda xx