

Planning a Cesarean Birth: Staying Connected

Preparing for your birth:

-You can consider going into labor. Although this may not go over well with care providers, it can give some women and families a sense of process and connection before heading to the hospital. The concern for some would be if the baby comes quickly. However, by having early labor, mom and baby are getting and producing endorphins for their birth. It is also good for the uterus to have some contractions before a cesarean birth for future pregnancies.

-Before heading to the hospital, create some special time with your partner without outside stimulation. Feel free to climb into bed with them in the dark and hold one another. Talk to the baby in this intimate space about what is about to happen and what might unfold. Play some music from your playlist for laboring. Be present.

-Have friends prepared to bring you good, healthy food at the hospital for the next few days and weeks following.

-If you have older children, involve them in this time as well. Be creative. Have them talk to baby.

-See if someone in your area (or your provider) provides a family centered cesarean birth if that fits your needs. <http://familycenteredcesareanproject.com/>

At the hospital, before and during the birth:

-Ask for "help" so that you feel heard about your needs.

-See if you can have both the mother, partner and another support person attend the birth. Sometimes the provider or anesthesiologist insist that only 2 people are allowed to be present. Let them know that you will have a person on stand-by in case the partner must follow the baby into the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). That way the support person can come and be present with the mother for the rest of her birth.

-If you do not know the sex of the baby, let the staff know that you want to be the one to announce and discover it rather than them!

-Bring a playlist for music to be played if you prefer. If they have music playing, feel free to ask them to turn it off or increase the volume.

-During the birth, the curtain that separates the sterile field and the mother's arms and head can be seen as an opportunity to have some intimate space. The partner can touch the mother on her arms and hands and face.

-The partner can also be the eyes for the mother who has a limited view of what is happening.

- Request ahead of time that if baby is well that it stay with the family. The partner can hold the baby next to the mother's face and chest and shoulders. See if mom wants to see the baby upside down or maybe look into baby's eyes right side up. Allow them to be skin to skin. Talk to the baby. The partner can also put baby skin to skin.

-Bring a camera and take a picture of mom with baby at her head if you are able.

After the birth, arriving home:

-Once home, crawl into bed as if baby was just born and savor the baby skin to skin. Allow others to serve the mother and baby so that there is time to enjoy this bond without the interference of bells and protocols. Reconnect.