

MIDWIFE BY NATURE 



# NATURAL BEGINNINGS

YOUR PREGNANCY JOURNEY  
GUIDED BY MIDWIFE BY NATURE



As a Midwife I spend a lot of time with pregnant women. At Midwife by Nature we try to educate women and their partners about pregnancy and birth as much as we can. I have come to the realization that I frequently answer the same questions repeatedly and that is what sparked the idea for this eBook.

With the help of our daughter, I have tried to add as much useful information into this book as possible to help you avoid running around looking for information and overwhelming yourself with all that is out there.

It is an easy to read and understand book to help you and other pregnant women have a positive and informed journey.

We hope that this book will be a stepping stone into your pregnancy journey and guide you to know what exactly it is you have to look out for and consider during your pregnancy.

For more information on Midwife by Nature's personal information, you can head over to our website at <https://midwifebynature.co.za/our-services/>.

Thank you !





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# PREGNANCY SYMPTOMS





## **First Trimester**

What to expect during the first trimester.



## **Second Trimester**

What to expect during the second trimester.



## **Third Trimester**

What to expect during the third trimester.



## **Group B Strep & Sciatica**

What group B strep and Sciatica are.



## **Left-sided Pregnancy Pain**

Causes of left-sided pregnancy pain.



## **Round Ligament Pain & Pelvic Pain**

Causes and Treatment for ligament and pelvic pain.



# FIRST TRIMESTER

Knowing what physical and emotional changes to expect can help you face the months ahead with confidence.



## FIRST TRIMESTER SYMPTOMS

- Tender, swollen breasts
- Nausea with or without vomiting
- Increased urination
- Fatigue
- Heartburn
- Constipation
- Emotional changes

Soon after conception, hormonal changes might make your breasts sensitive and sore. The discomfort will likely decrease after a few weeks as your body adjusts to hormonal changes. Morning sickness, which can strike at any time during the day or night is very common. This might be due to rising hormone levels. To help relieve nausea, choose foods that are low in fat, high in protein. Eat slowly and in small amounts every 1-2 hours. Drink plenty of fluids. Avoid foods or smells that make the nausea worse. Foods containing ginger might help. Vit B supplements may help.

The amount of blood in your body increases during pregnancy, causing your kidneys to process extra fluid that ends up in your bladder.

During early pregnancy, levels of the hormone Progesterone soar. Rest as much as you can. A healthy diet and exercise might increase your energy. Pregnancy hormones relaxing the valve between your stomach can allow stomach acid to leak into your esophagus, causing heartburn. Eat small, frequent meals.

Avoid fried foods, citrus fruits, spicy foods or any foods you notice trigger your symptoms. Try sleeping with an extra pillow under your head- the incline can help prevent stomach acid from splashing into your esophagus.

High levels of Progesterone can slow the movement of the food through your digestive system. Include plenty of fiber in your diet and drink lots of fluids, especially water. Drink prune juice. Regular physical activity may help. You might feel delighted, anxious, exhausted. A new baby can add emotional stress to your life. You might also experience mood swings. Take care of yourself and look to loved ones for understanding and encouragement.





# SECOND TRIMESTER

You might experience more physical changes.



As the uterus expands to make room for the baby, your belly grows. Your breasts will also gradually continue to increase in size. Hormonal changes stimulate an increase in pigment-bearing cells (melanin) in your skin. As a result, you might notice brown patches on your face (melasma). You might also see a dark line down your abdomen (linea nigra). These changes are common and usually fade after the birth of your baby. You might also have stretch marks. Your hormone levels increase and your body makes more blood. This can cause your mucus membrane to swell and bleed easily, resulting in stuffiness and nose bleeds. Saline drops can help relieve the congestion.

## SECOND TRIMESTER SYMPTOMS

- Growing Belly and breasts
- Skin changes
- Nasal problems
- Dental Issues
- Dizziness
- Leg cramps
- Vaginal discharge
- Urinary tract infections

Your gums can become more sensitive to flossing and brushing, resulting in minor bleeding. Rinsing with salt water and switching to a softer toothbrush can decrease irritation. Pregnancy causes changes in circulation that might leave you dizzy. Avoid standing for long periods, move slowly when you stand up or change position. When you feel dizzy, lie on your side. Leg cramps are very common. To prevent it, stretch your calf muscles before bed, stay active and drink plenty of fluids. A hot shower, warm bath or ice massage might help.



You might notice an increase in white creamy discharge due to higher levels of estrogen. It is normal and can be clear to milky white, thick or thin. Contact your healthcare provider if the discharge becomes strong smelling, unusual colour or if it is accompanied by pain, soreness or itching in your vaginal area. UTIs are common during pregnancy. Signs might be an urgent need to pee, trouble urinating, burning sensation, lower back pain, urine is cloudy or has an odor, blood in your urine. Contact your care provider if you experience any of these symptoms.

# THIRD TRIMESTER

You will feel lots of fetal activity and will experience many changes in your body.



## THIRD TRIMESTER SYMPTOMS

- Headaches
- Diarrhea
- Abdominal achiness
- Lightning cramps
- Fatigue
- Varicose veins
- Braxton Hicks
- Insomnia
- Lack of bladder control

Smells, lack of sleep, overheating and other factors can all trigger headaches. Try to stick to a regular exercise and sleep routine. Give yourself some much-needed quiet time to de-stress. Diarrhea might be a result of the extra fiber in your diet. As your body gears up for birth, some of the muscles in your body – including the rectum – loosen up, causing what is known as prelabor diarrhea. As you round ligaments stretch to accommodate your growing baby, you may feel cramps or even a sharp pain. There's not much you can do, other than take it easy. A sudden, sharp shock to the privates. One theory is that baby is pressing on a nerve that runs to the cervix. It should only last for a few seconds.



Fatigue is because of the demands that pregnancy is putting on your body. Eat well and frequently, stay active. You may notice varicose veins, including hemorrhoids, in your lower body due to all the extra blood you're pumping. Braxton Hicks are your body's way of preparing for labor. You'll start to feel these irregular practice surges. As the pregnancy hormone Relaxin loosens your joints, and your growing belly pulls your center of gravity forward, you may start to have backache. Put your feet up and relax. All the pregnancy symptoms such as cramps, constant trips to the toilet, just general aches and discomfort, can all cause insomnia.

You might experience crazy, more vivid dreams thanks to the pregnancy hormones. All the extra weight on the pelvic area makes it hard. Do your daily Kegel regimen.



# GROUP B STREP & SCIATICA

**Group B strep** is a type of streptococcal bacteria. It is very common and lives in the body. It is usually harmless, but sometimes it can affect a baby around the time of birth. Testing for Group B strep is not routinely offered. Many women carry the bacteria and in the majority of cases, babies are born safely and without developing an infection. Screening cannot accurately predict which babies will develop GBS infection. Giving antibiotics to all carriers would mean that a very large number of women would receive treatment they do not need. This could be harmful to the baby.

**Sciatica** - A pinched nerve in your lower back due to postural changes from the growing baby in the uterus. Characterized by a numb ache in one buttock, burning pain down sections of the leg and foot of the affected side, a lame feeling in parts of the leg and burning or tingling in the toes.

**Recommendations:** Alternate rest and activity, Correct posture when walking, Don't slouch when sitting, See a healthcare professional like a physiotherapist or chiropractor for an assessment.



# LEFT-SIDED PREGNANCY PAIN



Many women experiences left-side pain during pregnancy. In early pregnancy it can be a sign that your body is stretching to make room for baby, it can be digestive issues or constipation. Later in pregnancy it can be caused by the ligaments in your abdomen stretching. Urinary tract infections can cause pain in your left side at any point in your pregnancy. Don't do any heavy lifting, Try sleeping with a pillow between your knees, Move more slowly, Use a heating pad, never more than 10 min at a time and Rest more often.

## **CONTACT YOUR CARE PROVIDER IF YOU EXPERIENCE**

- Vaginal bleeding
- Fever
- Severe pain
- Blood in bowel movements
- Pain when urinating
- Baby moving less
- Trouble moving around



# LIGAMENT & PELVIC PAIN

**ROUND LIGAMENT PAIN** - A sharp pain or jabbing feeling in the lower belly or groin area, on one or both sides. Most often felt during the 2nd trimester. As your baby and uterus grow, the round ligament stretches. This makes it more likely to become strained. It is considered normal as your body changes during pregnancy. **Treatment:** Exercise to help keep your core muscles strong. Stretching exercises and yoga can be helpful. – Put your hands and knees on the floor, lowering your head and pushing your backside into the air, Avoid sudden movements. Change positions slowly, Bend and flex your hips before you cough, sneeze or laugh to avoid pulling the ligaments, Apply warmth. A heating pad or warm bath may be helpful and Always tell your care provider if you have any type of pain and call immediately if you have severe pain, fever, pain on urination, difficulty walking

**PELVIC PAIN –PELVIS GIRDLE PAIN (PGP)** - Caused by stiffness or uneven movement of the pelvic joints in pregnancy. Pain can range from a dull ache to a severe pain. Certain types of movement, such as widening the legs or leaning on one leg, can make the pain worse. **Treatment:** Hands-on therapy to restore normal movement of muscles and joints in the pelvis – chiropractor, physiotherapist, Exercises to strengthen the pelvic floor, Exercise in water, Pelvic support belt, Meditation/yoga, Massages, Reflexology and Rest.





# YOUR ANTENATAL JOURNEY



01

## **The Ultrasound**

Why get an ultrasound. When the scans happen and the types of scans.

02

## **Different Providers**

Registered Midwife, Traditional Midwife, Doula, Gynecologist.

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## **Your First Visit**

What happens at your first visit; medical history, tests, care discussion, HIV patients and mental health assessment.

04

## **Your Birth Plan**

What is a birth plan and what to consider for your birth plan. Includes a birth plan template.

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## **Antenatal Classes**

Why you should attend antenatal classes, hypnobirthing, exercise and yoga.

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## **Warning Signs & Diet Tips**

Signs to look out for, and foods to avoid.





# THE ULTRASOUND

**Congratulations**, you took the pregnancy test and it showed positive, now what?

Now that you are aware of the little bundle of joy growing in your belly, it is important to see and be informed about how your baby is developing. Having a scan, ultrasound, done is one of the first important steps during your pregnancy. It can provide you and your healthcare provider with important information on your pregnancy as well as the baby's growth and development. A scan may be done **before 10 weeks** due to certain medical cases or if your pregnancy is considered high risk, such as unusual bleeding or if you experienced problems during your previous pregnancies.

Deciding to have a scan done is a personal choice!

## WHY AN ULTRASOUND?

- Confirm your pregnancy.
- Is the baby in the womb.
- Check how many weeks you are pregnant.
- Calculate an estimated due date.
- Detect a heartbeat.
- Is there more than one baby.



Different types of ultrasounds are available at different stages of your pregnancy. The **Dating scan** is done around 7-10 weeks and will indicate how far along you are in your pregnancy. An **NT (Nuchal Translucency) scan** measures the fluid behind baby's neck and checks for chromosome abnormalities such as Down Syndrome. The **Gender scan** shows the gender of your baby and is done around 16 weeks. An **Anomaly scan** is done around 20-24 weeks and examines each part of fetal body, position of placenta and amniotic fluid.

The **Pre-delivery scan** is done at 36-40 weeks and examines fetal position, amniotic fluid index and placenta. Low risk public hospital clients may only be referred for the anomaly scan. A private Midwife or Obstetrician might refer a client for more scans.

# THE PROVIDERS

**1**

## **GYNECOLOGIST OB-GYN**

Medical Doctor.  
Hospital birth.

**2**

## **REGISTERED MIDWIFE**

Licensed.  
Low-risk pregnancy.  
Natural Birth.

**3**

## **TRADITIONAL MIDWIFE**

Not licensed.  
Lay-Midwife.

**4**

## **DOULA**

Not a midwife.  
Support during labour.

# OB-GYN

A gynecologist, or obstetrician, are trained medical doctors who typically focus on high-risk pregnancies amongst others. These doctors are trained in the reproductive health of women as well as delivering babies. They are also trained to perform c-sections in case of an emergency. If you choose a gynecologist as your provider, you should note that your baby's birth will take place in a hospital so it is important to have your medical aid ready. You will also be obligated to pay a fee as well as sign a contract of agreement.



# MIDWIFE

A registered midwife is a trained nurse or midwife registered with the South African Nursing Council who is allowed to practice independently at a private practice, birthing center or perform home-births and typically handles low-risk pregnancies. They provide care from the start to the end of your pregnancy focusing on maternal and reproductive health as well as neonatal health. Midwives do not perform c-sections and are thus the best option for moms hoping to have a natural birth. You will also be obligated to pay a fee as well as sign a contract of agreement.

In South Africa, Midwives in our public service also work independently at Midwifery Obstetric Units (MOU), as well as in hospitals in high risk units.



# TRADITIONAL MIDWIFE

A traditional midwife is not registered or licensed as a midwife but performs some of the same duties as a registered midwife. They provide care during pregnancy based on informal training, traditions or experience



# DOULA

A doula is known as a birth companion. They are not trained medical professionals and do not deliver babies, but rather provide emotional, physical and mental support to the mother during the pregnancy. Your doula may be present during labor depending on the hospital, doctor or midwife's policies. Having a doula often keeps you as the mom in positive spirits as well as improves your perception of how the pregnancy may go.



# YOUR FIRST VISIT

IT IS  
IMPORTANT TO  
KEEP TRACK OF  
YOUR LAST  
PERIOD



## MEDICAL HISTORY

- Prior pregnancies.
- Current health problems.
- Medications.
- Allergies
- Substance use.
- Family medical history.
- Genetic conditions

The first antenatal appointment is where you as the new mom will discuss many important topics with your healthcare provider. The discussions focus on the overall health of you and your baby. These antenatal appointments are important throughout your pregnancy as it will help you stay informed about any complications, baby's health, development and growth. Your healthcare provider will do a full medical history check that includes previous pregnancies as well as important family history such as any genetic conditions that may be passed on to your baby. Your provider will also perform a series of tests to ensure there

## TESTS

- Blood pressure.
- Weight and Height.
- Urine test.
- Blood test:
  - STI
  - Blood Group
  - Iron
  - HIV

## CARE DISCUSSION

- Risk assessment.
- Health care provider.
- How many visits.
- Where you will give birth.
- Antenatal classes.
- Birth plan.

## HIV PATIENTS

It is important to have an HIV test done as the disease can spread to your baby during pregnancy, at birth or during breastfeeding.

Getting treatment before and during your pregnancy can prevent your baby from being infected.

are no complications with you or your baby's health. The blood test is done to indicate any infections or diseases that could affect your baby.

Your healthcare provider will also conduct a risk assessment - high risk or low risk - which will determine where you may or may not give birth.

It is important to discuss your birth plan with your healthcare provider during these sessions to make your wishes during labour clear to them.



Your healthcare provider may also conduct a mental health assessment to ensure that you are mentally healthy. Below is an example of the assessment. \*Note that this assessment is not to be conducted by yourself.

|   |  |                                 |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| In the last 2 weeks, have you on some or most days felt unable to stop worrying or thinking too much?                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes [1]   | <input type="checkbox"/> No [0] |
| In the last 2 weeks, have you on some or most days felt down, depressed or hopeless?                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes [1]   | <input type="checkbox"/> No [0] |
| In the last 2 weeks, have you on some or most days had thoughts <b>and</b> plans to harm yourself or commit suicide?* | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes [1]<br><b>Refer</b>   | <input type="checkbox"/> No [0] |
| <b>TOTAL SCORE</b>  | <input type="checkbox"/> 1<br><input type="checkbox"/> 2 >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> refer<br><input type="checkbox"/> 3 >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>> refer |                                 |
| Offered Counselling   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes   | <input type="checkbox"/> No     |
| Accepted counselling  | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes   | <input type="checkbox"/> No     |

If your healthcare provider notes a cause for concern, they may refer you to a mental health specialist. However, it is important to note that you have a choice to decide whether or not you want to accept the counselling.

# YOUR BIRTH PLAN

YOUR PLAN  
MAY CHANGE  
THROUGHOUT  
YOUR  
PREGNANCY



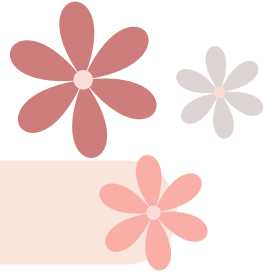
## WHAT TO CONSIDER

- Type of labor you would like.
- Who is your birth companion.
- Feeding the baby.
- Cultural factors.
- Skin-to-skin.
- Delayed chord clamping.
- Breastfeed or formula.

There are many natural things during your pregnancy that you are unable to control, but one aspect that you as the new mom have some control over is the processes you would like to happen during the labor and birth of your baby. While this may change overtime and sometimes even during labor, your birth plan helps you to express and make clear your wishes for your labor. Be sure to discuss your birth plan with your healthcare provider during your antenatal visits. You can find a birth plan example below.



# MY BIRTH PLAN



Parents:

Due Date:

## BIRTH TYPE

- Vaginal
- C-section
- VBAC. (vaginal birth after cesarean )
- Water Birth

## HEALTH

- Gestational Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Placenta issues
- Other:

## PAIN

- Unmedicated
- Epidural
- IV Pain medication
- Other:

## DURING LABOR

- Birthing Ball
- Free movement
- Limited cervical checks
- Intermittent monitoring

## INDUCTION

- Break Water
- Membrane Sweep
- Cervical Ripening Balloon

## DURING BIRTH

- Delayed Chord Clamping
- Immediate skin-to-skin
- Use Mirror

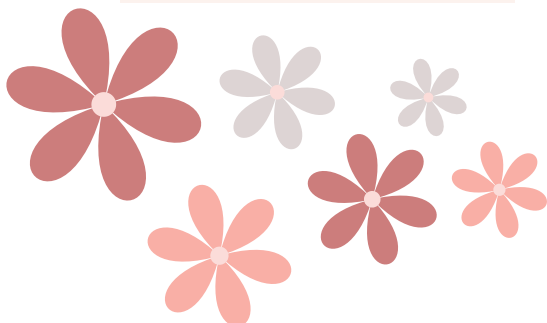
Who will cut the chord:

## AFTER BIRTH

- Take placenta home
- Chord blood banking

## NOTE:

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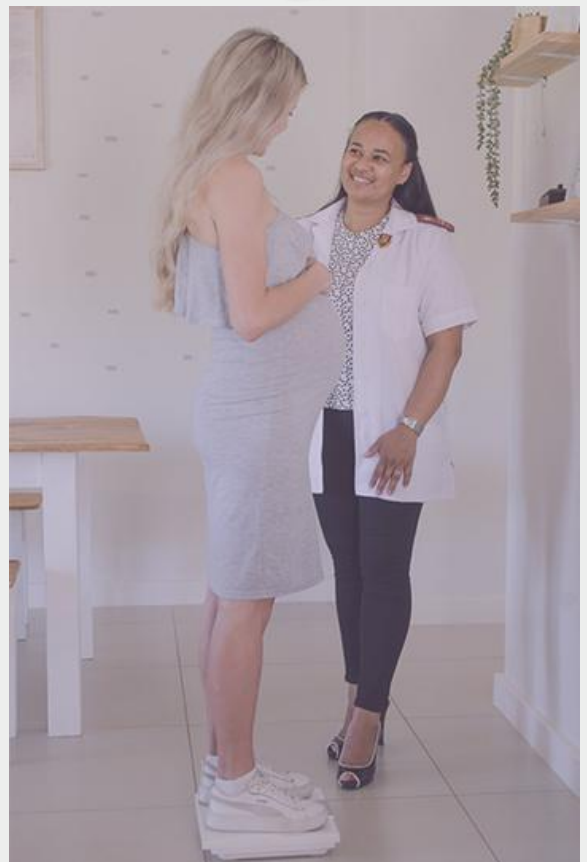


# ANTENATAL CLASSES

## WHY ANTENATAL CLASSES?

As a new mom you may begin to feel overwhelmed with all the different information you are receiving, ensuring that you and your baby stay healthy as well as best practices to incorporate during your pregnancy. Antenatal classes are a great way for new moms and parents to feel more confident and calm about the pregnancy and birth of the baby. Antenatal classes are a great way to prepare for labor, birth, breastfeeding and taking care of a new baby. The role of your partner also becomes more clear.

EDUCATE YOURSELF ON DIFFERENT OPTIONS DURING YOUR PREGNANCY



### HYPNOBIRTHING

Hypnobirthing classes are a great way to prepare mom's body and mind for the birth. It uses techniques that relax the body and helps manage anxiety related to the birth of your baby. Visit

<https://mybirthingkit.com/> for tools to manage your birth yourself.

A few things discussed in antenatal classes:

- New Born Care
- Pregnancy well-being
- Signs of Labor
- Stages of Labor
- Breastfeeding



## EXERCISE

Before jumping straight into any form of exercise it is important to consult your healthcare provider and find out whether or not you are cleared to workout during your pregnancy. There are many benefits to exercise during your pregnancy, such as increased energy, preparation for labor, stress relief as well as weight control. Ensure that you only perform low intensity workouts such as yoga, walking or swimming for limited time periods.

### EXERCISES

- Low-intensity.
- Do not exercise to exhaustion.
- Stay well hydrated.
- Do not increase intensity.
- Do warm-ups and cool-downs.
- Eat a small snack an hour before.

### YOGA

- The Mountain Pose
- Child Pose
- Squat Pose
- Cat and Cow Pose
- Belly Breathing

Follow the [link](#) for more information on these yoga poses.

# WARNING SIGNS & DIET TIPS

IT IS IMPORTANT  
TO KEEP YOUR  
IRON LEVELS  
NORMAL  
DURING  
PREGNANCY



## WARNING SIGNS

- Severe nausea or vomiting.
- Itchy skin.
- Low emotional mood for more than 2 weeks.
- Fever or chills.
- Vaginal Bleeding.
- Burning Urination.
- Alteration in baby's movement.

Pregnancy is no easy journey and with this journey, as little as we would like to admit it, there are warning signs and complications to keep your eyes open for as a new mom. Being aware of these signs will ensure that you know the necessary steps to take in case of an emergency. A few things to look out for are any disturbance in your vision such as blurriness, headaches or shortness of breath amongst others. Be sure to contact your healthcare provider as soon as you notice any abnormal activity during your pregnancy.



Having a balanced diet is also important to ensure you and your baby remain healthy throughout your pregnancy and that you are taking in enough of the necessary nutrients. A balanced diet includes foods such as whole-grains, certain types of meat and fish, vegetables, fruits and water. Coffee, tea and low sugar drinks are allowed but only at a limited amount. Two of the most important nutrients to consider during your pregnancy are iron and vitamin D as it will aid your baby's development and growth. You may have different pregnancy cravings but it is important to keep your intake balanced.

## FOOD TO AVOID

- Soft cheese e.g. feta cheese.
- Undercooked or raw meat and fish.
- Cured fish.
- Undercooked or raw eggs.
- Alcohol.

## SUPPLEMENTS

- Folic acid.
- Magnesium.
- Iron.
- Vitamin D.
- Vitamin C.
- Calcium.

Consult your healthcare provider before taking any supplements.





# LABOUR AND BIRTH



07

## **The Birth Bag**

When to prepare your birth bag and what to include.

08

## **Your Partner's Role**

Things your birth partner can do to assist you.

09

## **Types of Birth**

Vaginal delivery, VBAC, C-section and assisted vaginal delivery.

10

## **Signs of Labour**

Early signs of labour, false alarms, signs of an emergency and how to time your contractions. Video included.

11


## **Stages of Labour**

First stage, Transition period, second stage, the birth and the final stage of labour.

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## **Why a c-section?**

What a c-section is, common reasons for a c-section and what to do after a c-section.



# THE BIRTH BAG

REPAIR YOUR  
BAG AT LEAST  
6 WEEKS  
BEFORE DUE  
DATE



## LABOUR BAG

- Copies of your records, e.g. ID, hospital paperwork.
- Face cloths.
- Soft bathrobe.
- Comfortable slippers.
- Lip balm.
- Entertainment, e.g. Netflix.

It is important to ensure that you have everything you and your baby needs for his/her arrival. That is why many professionals suggest having your labour bag ready during the eighth month of your pregnancy and keeping it in a convenient place for when the big day arrives. A few things to keep in mind are warm socks, body lotion, your birth plan, eye mask and earplugs amongst others.

There may be a few things you need after you give birth to your baby. You can include these items in the same labour bag or have a separate bag for after birth.



## BABY'S BAG

- Nappies.
- Comfortable clothing.
- Socks & Booties.
- Warm blanket.

## AFTER LABOUR BAG

- Sanitary pads.
- Clean stretchy underwear.
- Comfortable nursing bras.
- Toiletries, e.g. toothbrush.
- Phone and charger.
- Comfortable clothes.

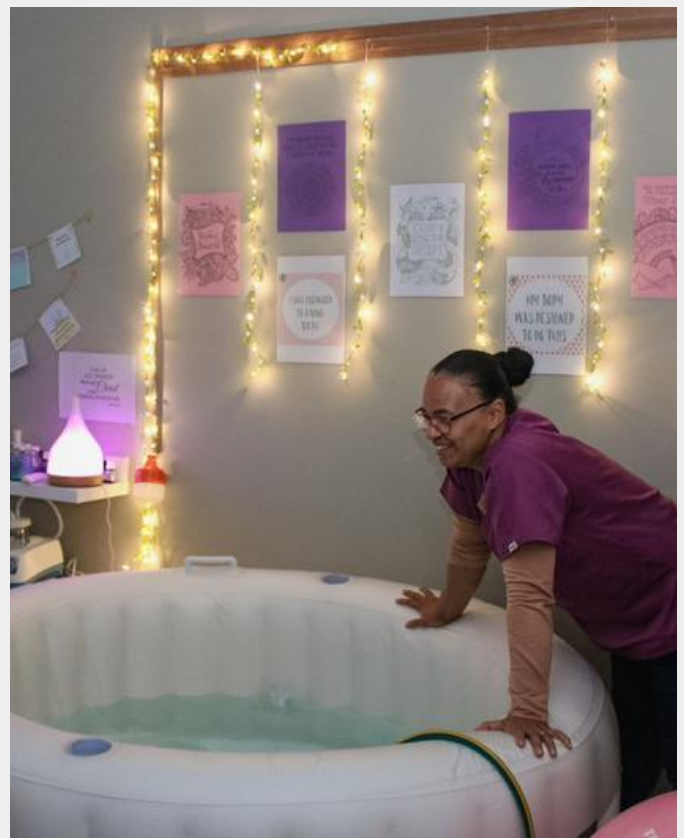
## ADDITIONAL ITEMS

- Liquid refreshments.
- Any familiar object you would like to have with you.
- Digital camera - home birth midwives allow birth photographers. Consult with the hospital about birth photography regulations.
- Pillows.
- Snacks

Some after labour items may include a nightgown, your cosmetics products, glasses or contact lenses, etc.

Be sure to pack a separate bag for your baby as he/she will also require a few things after birth. You should also ensure that your baby's car seat is ready for when it is time to head home.

If your partner is staying with you they should also pack a few essential items they might need during the labour and birth time.



# YOUR PARTNER'S ROLE

A birth partner is the person who stays by your side through the labour and birth and provides you with support. There are a few things you as a birth partner can do to ensure mom and baby are at ease. Before the baby is born, it is a good idea to do a 'dry-run' to the place of birth. This will help you manage your time for when the day arrives. Consider joining your partner for antenatal classes and discuss the birth plan together.



MAKE SURE  
YOUR PARTNER  
IS IN SYNC  
WITH YOUR  
NEEDS

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Stay in regular contact with your partner.
- Help her move around and change positions.
- Physical touch and reassurance.
- Keep the home neat.

During labour you can have a cool cloth to wipe your partner down if they are feeling hot and offer her massages to help her relax.

After your baby is born make sure that you have all the relevant medical contact numbers in case of an emergency. It is important that mom feels comfortable with her birth partner, so ensure that you take care of yourself as well to provide the best support to your partner.

# TYPES OF BIRTH

**1**

## **VAGINAL BIRTH**

Baby is born through vagina or birth canal.

**2**

## **VBAC**

Vaginal birth after c-section.

**3**

## **C-SECTION (CESAREAN)**

Surgical procedure done by doctor.

**4**

## **ASSISTED VAGINAL DELIVERY**

Forceps or a vacuum device is used to get baby out.

# VAGINAL BIRTH

The vaginal delivery occurs when your baby is born through your vagina or birth canal and occurs most often between 37 and 42 weeks of pregnancy. There are three stages of vaginal delivery, labour, birth and delivering the placenta which is discussed in the next section. There is also a difference between spontaneous and induced delivery. Spontaneous delivery is when labour happens on its own without induction. Drugs or other techniques are used to start labour in induced vaginal delivery due to a medical condition or if you are past your due date.



## VBAC

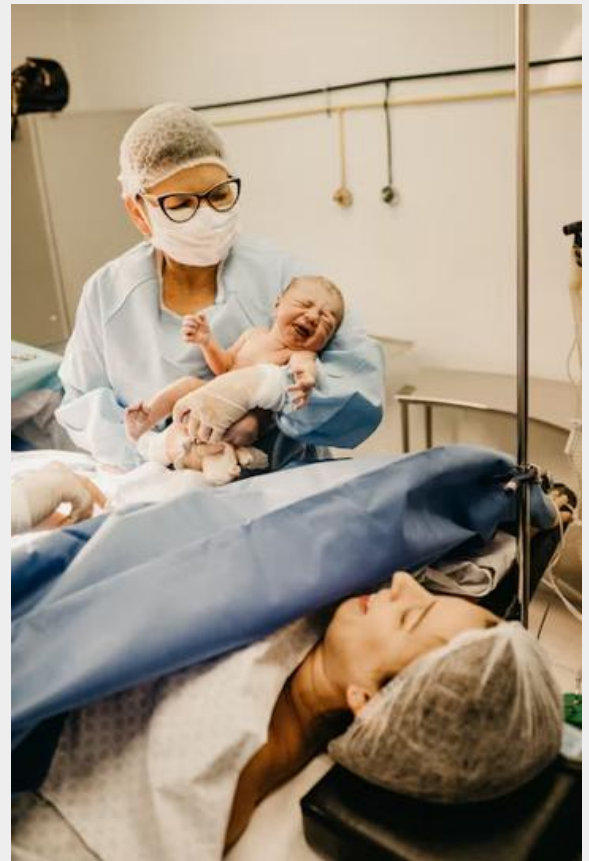
If you have had a c-section with your previous birth and would like to have a vaginal delivery this time around, that is referred to as a VBAC - vaginal birth after c-section. By law in South Africa, a registered midwife may not do VBACs at home. As a mom with a history of a c-section, you must give birth in a hospital with an emergency theater and doctor on site.





# C-SECTION

When your doctor helps deliver your baby through a surgical process in your abdomen and uterus region, you are having a c-section - cesarean birth. A c-section is either planned in advance or is decided upon during labour due to a serious medical emergency. A few reasons for a c-section may include fetal distress, no progress during labour, placenta abruption or excessive bleeding.



## ASSISTED VAGINAL DELIVERY

Assisted vaginal delivery occurs when your doctor uses forceps or a vacuum device to help get your baby out of your vagina. An assisted delivery often happens because you have been in labour a long time and show no signs of progress or your baby is showing signs of distress.



# SIGNS OF LABOUR

LABOUR VARIES  
AND CAN START  
AT DIFFERENT  
TIMES FOR  
DIFFERENT  
PEOPLE



## EARLY SIGNS

- Period like cramps.
- Lower back pains.
- Changes in vaginal discharge.  
e.g. Bloody Show.
- Diarrhoea.
- Water break.

As your body prepares to bring your baby out into the world, you may notice early signs of labour. The most common sign of labour starting are the contractions that feel like period pains as well as backaches. A real contraction will keep you awake, does not go away for long periods of time and gets more intense as time progresses. Moms may also notice the mucus plug or 'show' - bloodstained or pink in color - come out which indicates that your cervix is starting to open. Another sign is your water breaking. It is important to note that this liquid should be clear or milky in colour.

If you notice that your water is yellow, brown or green, or your water breaks before labour has started, contact your healthcare provider immediately. When your contractions become longer, stronger and more regular, that is your indication that you are in labour. Timing your contractions at home will be very helpful for you and your partner to know when it is time to see your midwife or go to the hospital. We have included a video for you below to demonstrate how you can use an app at home to time your contractions.

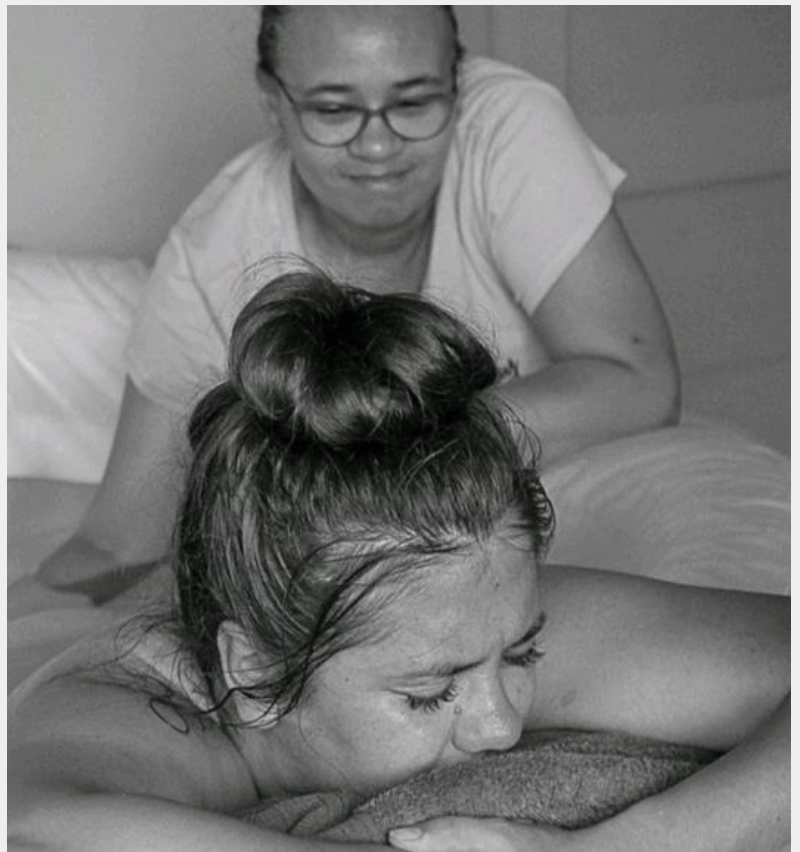
## **FALSE ALARMS**

- Prodromal labor and Braxton Hicks

These are false or premature contractions. Felt in the front of your abdomen but are not strong enough to cause active labour and show no signs of labour.

## **SIGNS OF EMERGENCY**

- Heavy vaginal bleeding.
- Severe headache.
- Blurred vision.
- Concerned with baby's movements.



# How to Time Your Contractions



# STAGES OF LABOUR

FIND A  
POSITION  
THAT WORKS  
FOR YOU



## FIRST STAGE

- Latent and Active phase.
- Duration varies for everyone.
- Regular contractions.
- Cervix begins to dilate.
- Baby moves deeper into pelvis.

You have finally reached one of the most memorable moments of your pregnancy journey and are just a few steps closer to meeting your baby. Exciting! During the first stage, it is important that you take it easy. Do not become anxious and keep in touch with your caregiver. Ensure that, if you are not having a homebirth, your birth bag is packed in the car. Try to stay relaxed and avoid causing yourself exhaustion. Be sure to leave to your midwife or hospital as soon as you feel it is necessary. As your contractions become more intense during the transition period, remind yourself that your baby is almost in your arms.

## TRANSITION PERIOD

- Occurs before onset of second stage.
- Short phase - 7-10 cm.
- Contractions become more intense.
- You have an urge to push.

## SECOND STAGE

- Cervix is fully dilated.
- Contractions are intense. Every 2-4 minutes.
- Urge to push.
- Baby crowns.

## THE BIRTH

- Allow your midwife or healthcare provider to guide you through the pushing.
- Midwife will check that the chord is not wrapping around baby's head.
- Your final contraction will deliver the shoulders followed by the rest of the body.

During the second stage when the hard work begins, try to relax and breathe normally between contractions to try and save energy. During this period, you have the urge to push as well as a feeling to empty your bowels. It is a normal occurrence and you should not think about it too much.

It is important to find a position that is comfortable for you to be in when it is time to deliver your baby.



There may be a few reasons that your labour occurs slower such as irregular contractions, your baby is positioned awkwardly or if you are a first time mom.

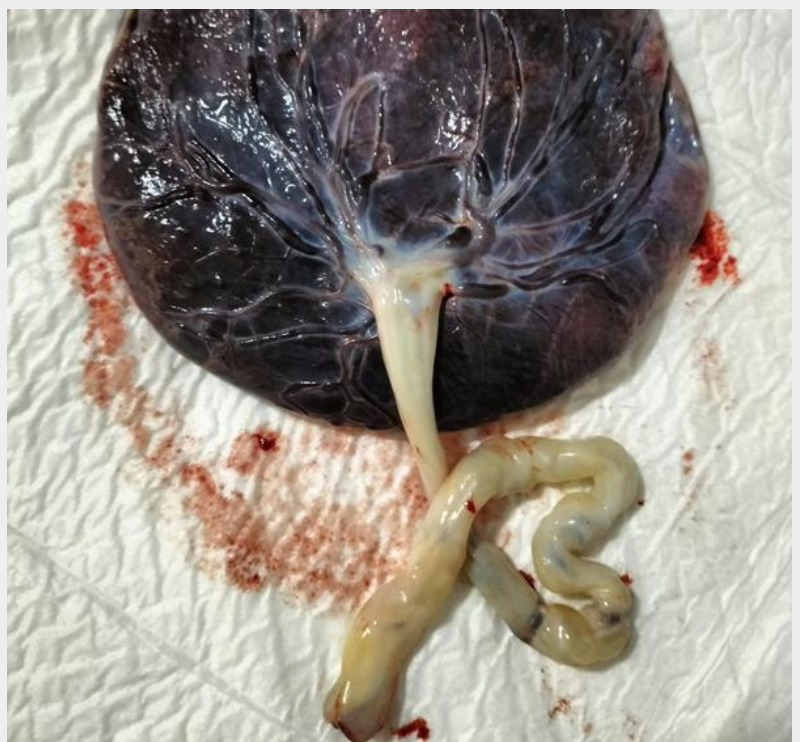
Your midwife or provider may suggest breaking your water but it is still your choice if you wish to do any interventions. In the hospital they might advise you to augment your labour by giving drugs, eg. oxytocin.

During labour, your midwife or provider will regularly check your baby's heartbeat.

In the third stage of labour, your uterus gently contracts to deliver the placenta. You generally do not even notice that this is happening because of all the excitement around your new born baby. Your midwife or provider will carefully monitor you during this stage to ensure that the placenta is delivered and that there is no excessive bleeding.

### THIRD STAGE

- The placenta must be delivered.
- Usually occurs naturally.
- Will be examined by your provider to ensure that it is complete.



# WHY A C-SECTION?

## Cesarean Section

“A cesarean is not a failed birth, it is simply a change of plan”. If your c-section was not planned in advance you may feel disappointed when your healthcare provider suggests one during labour. However, it is important to note that a c-section is just another way of giving birth and that the health of you and your baby are what is most important. There are a few medical reasons for needing a c-section so it is important that you stay informed by attending antenatal classes, reading about c-sections and asking your healthcare provider to explain your reasons for needing a c-section.

EDUCATE  
YOURSELF ON  
DIFFERENT  
OPTIONS  
DURING YOUR  
PREGNANCY



### COMMON REASONS FOR C-SECTION

- Medical conditions, e.g pre-eclampsia, kidney or heart disease.
- Fetal distress.
- Placenta praevia - could result in a haemorrhage in vaginal delivery.

What to do at home after your c-section:

- Relax. Taking it easy will help your recovery.
- Keep the scar protected.
- Ask for help and support.
- **DO NOT LIFT HEAVY THINGS.**





# YOUR POSTNATAL JOURNEY



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## **After the Birth**

What happens at postnatal care. Kangaroo care, breastfeeding and chord care.

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## **Taking your baby home**

When your baby can be taken home and what happens at home.

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## **Birth Registration**

When and where to register your baby.

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Health concerns; what to expect, what to do and when to seek help.

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## **Postnatal Depression**

What postnatal depression is and signs thereof.

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## **Frequently Asked Questions**

FAQs and Answers.



# AFTER THE BIRTH

## POSTNATAL CARE



Postnatal care starts immediately after the birth of your baby. After normal birth you are advised to attend your postnatal clinic in the first 10 days. If you birthed at a government hospital, your postnatal visits will be done at the nearest MOU or clinic. You will receive a discharge letter with all your labour details and follow up dates. You will:

- Support you in your return to physical health.
- Monitor vital signs, bleeding, perinium, etc
- Follow up on any complications from pregnancy and birth
- Support you to successfully breastfeed your baby
- Assess your emotional wellbeing
- Baby will be offered a Vit k injection
- Newborn examination is done before discharge

Advice on where to go for follow up visits and vaccinations

### KANGAROO CARE

- Directly after birth.
- Skin-to-skin.
- Improves the bonding process between you and baby.
- Assists in reducing stress and anxiety.
- Click [here](#) for more information on postnatal care in the Western Cape.



# BREASTFEEDING

Just like any new skill, breastfeeding takes time and practice to work well. In the first few days, you and your baby will be getting to know each other and you may need a lot of support – this is normal. Close contact and keeping baby skin-to-skin can really help with this.

## Making milk

With each feed your baby lets your body know how much milk it needs to produce. During the early days, frequent feeds stimulate milk producing cells in your breasts. The earlier and more frequently your breasts are stimulated, the more milk cells are activated. This helps with long-term milk production.



## Feeding cues

- baby opens mouth and searches for breast
- make suckling sounds and motions
- sucking fingers
- feed baby asap rather than waiting for baby to
- become restless and cry

## Is Your Baby Feeding Enough?

During the first 24 hours, it is common for babies to sleep a lot. They can sleep for up to 18 hours and only feed 3-4 times during this time.



Labour and birth can also be very exhausting for baby. It is fine for baby to have longer sleep periods.

Keep baby close to you, skin to skin and look out for feeding cues. Generally, your baby will let you know if they are not getting enough. Wet and dirty nappies are a good indication. In the first 48 hours your baby is likely to have 2-3 wet nappies. It will start to get more frequent, with at least 6 every 24hrs from day 5 onwards.

The colour of their stool will change. On day 1 they pass meconium (black), day 2-3 it will be a lighter greenish colour and from day 4 it will be yellow.



## CHORD CARE

It is important to keep the cord clean and dry.

Wash your hands before you clean the cord

Clean with luke-warm water, using cotton wool and dry it thoroughly afterwards. You don't have to use surgical spirits.

Leave the cord outside the nappy to prevent it from getting moist.

Observe the cord for bleeding, pussy discharge, offensive smell and redness of the skin around the cord area.

It should fall off by day 5, but can take up to 10 days.

# TAKING BABY HOME

If you and your baby are well, you will be discharged after birth. Postnatal visits will be discussed with you. Be reassured that you will get the support and care you need from your midwife.

During this period many parents can feel overwhelmed with the new changes and caring for a new baby.

You may also be dealing with feelings of anxiety, stress or depression.

Your postnatal care will be individualised according to the needs of you and your baby. The minimum recommended number of contact visits are 2, but may be increased depending on your needs.

You will come for your post-natal visits on days 3 and 7.

During these visits the physical health and wellbeing of both you and baby will be assessed.



The first few weeks may feel overwhelming so it is important that you as a new parent or parents make time to take care of your personal well-being as well. Try to get rest when the baby is asleep, ask your partner for help with activities and chores and try to have 'time out' for yourself a few minutes every day.

# BIRTH REGISTRATION

THE BIRTH  
MUST BE  
REGISTERED  
WITHIN 30  
DAYS

It is through this process that you will receive a birth certificate. Your healthcare provider will provide you with a Birth Registration form completed by them and a home-birth midwife will give you a copy of their ID as well.

You have to take all these documents, plus both parents' ID documents and marriage certificate (if married) to do the registration.

All South African citizens can go to home affairs offices at any one of the hospitals nearest to you to do the registration.

If you wish to go to a private hospital, you have to make an appointment.

# HEALTH EDUCATION

|                          | WHAT TO EXPECT  | WHAT TO DO   | WHEN TO SEEK HELP   |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>CARE OF PERINIUM</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may experience discomfort or stinging in the first few days after birth, even if you don't have stitches</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Change sanitary pads regularly.</li> <li>Keep perinium clean Saltsitz baths</li> <li>Gel pads</li> <li>Ice packs Analgesia such as Paracetamol</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sings of infection – offensive smell Severe pain</li> </ul>  |
| <b>HEADACHE</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mild headaches due to factors such as tiredness</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rest &amp; relaxation Hydration- drink plenty of water</li> <li>analgesia</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headaches that worsen, even after rest or pain tablets</li> <li>Other symptoms of preeclampsia</li> </ul>  |
| <b>CONSTIPATION</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It may take a couple of days to pass stools</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drink lots of fluids and</li> <li>Eat fibre rich foods Don't avoid going to the toilet</li> <li>Take a gentle laxative</li> </ul>                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you haven't passed</li> <li>Stools for longer than 3 days or experiencing incontinence (no control over your bowels)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>PILES</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It may feel painful or itchy. Sometimes you might notice a small amount of blood, especially if you're straining when you pass stools</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase fluid intake, eat fruits and fibre Saltbath may help You can apply witchazel or haemorrhoid cream/suppositories</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you experience severe, swollen or prolapsed haemorrhoids or bleeding</li> </ul>   |
| <b>FATIGUE</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is normal to feel more tired than usual while your body is recovering</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eat a good balanced diet</li> <li>Take time to rest and sleep</li> <li>Ask your partner to help</li> <li>Do gentle exercises</li> </ul>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you're taking tablets for anaemia and have other symptoms like dizziness and headaches.</li> <li>Feeling depressed Having trouble sleeping</li> </ul>                             |
| <b>PASSING URINE</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may be afraid to pass urine after birth, especially if you have stitches.</li> <li>It is important that you urinate frequently</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urinate frequently Drink plenty of fluids Do pelvic floor exercises</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finding it difficult to pass urine (retention) You have no control (leaking)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>BLEEDING</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normal postpartum bleeding typically lasts 4- 8 weeks in total</li> <li>First 2 days mis heavy, but gradually subsides to a lighter flow until it goes away</li> <li>A few blood clots are normal</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make sure your uterus is well contracted. Massage the uterus – it will feel like a ball Monitor the bleeding Change pads regularly</li> </ul>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Active bleeding</li> <li>Passing large blood clots (bigger than a plum)</li> <li>Bleeding that soaks more than one pad in less than an hour and doesn't slow down or stop</li> </ul> |
| <b>BACKACHE</b>          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This could be due to hormones, position during labour or poor posture</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Don't lift heavy objects Make sure you have good posture</li> <li>Support your back Rest</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symptoms such as numbness or strange sensation in your legs If it worsens and not relieved with analgesia</li> </ul>   |
| <b>SENSITIVE BREASTS</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>During the first 48 hours, your breasts will fill and breast and nipples might be sore and sensitive</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feed baby regularly, on demand</li> <li>Good latch</li> <li>Warm/ cold compress Frozen Cabbage leaves Nipple cream</li> </ul>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engorged, painful, swollen breasts Redness</li> <li>Fever</li> </ul>   |



# POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

## WHAT IS POSTNATAL DEPRESSION?

Postnatal depression is different to feeling overwhelmed because it is more severe and feelings of hopelessness, sadness or numbness last longer and it becomes difficult to cope with or enjoy daily life activities. You may also notice a change in appetite or sleeping habits. Postnatal depression can become worse over time if not treated. It should be noted that postnatal depression is different to the 'baby blues' many new mom's feel after giving birth. The baby blue feelings usually pass quickly on their own. You may also experience postnatal anxiety such as fear or worry that things are difficult to control. It is important to check in with your healthcare provider if you recognise any of the symptoms mentioned.

EVERYONE  
EXPERIENCES  
POSTNATAL  
DEPRESSION  
DIFFERENTLY



### SIGNS OF POSTNATAL DEPRESSION

- Feeling low or 'numb'.
- A feeling of hopelessness or worthlessness.
- Sleeping too much or no sleep at all.
- Difficulty engaging in and coping with daily activities.
- Thoughts of self-harm.

# FAQS

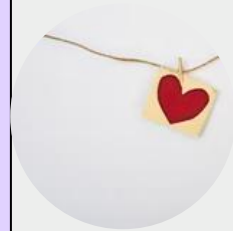
## Is cramping during pregnancy normal?

You may experience cramping very early in your pregnancy due to the embryo implanting into your uterus. Cramping is also caused by uterine ligament spasm and/or irritation of nearby nerve fibers. It should go away on its own. Contact your provider right away if cramping persists or worsens.



## When does heartburn start during pregnancy?

Heartburn can happen at any time, and for some women, it begins in the first trimester. Pregnancy hormones like progesterone relax the valve between your stomach and esophagus. As a result stomach acid can back up, causing you to feel the burn.



## When can I start to feel the baby move?

You can feel your baby move usually midway through your second trimester, 20-22 weeks. Initially it may feel like gentle flutters in your belly. Rest assured, your baby has moved before, but they were too small for you to feel it. Second (third, fourth or fifth) time moms may notice these flutters earlier.



## What medicine can I take for flu?

The following safe flu remedies to try during pregnancy:

**Paracetamol:** Take a Panado every 4-6 hours. **Vitamin C:** Take 1000mg daily. Drink a mixture of **honey and lemon** heated to alleviate coughs. **Expigen syrup** is safe. Take **Sinupret** tablets for relief of congestion. **Euphorbium drops** for symptomatic relief of flu symptoms. Drink plenty of fluids.



# FAQS

## Why do i feel dizzy?

During pregnancy, progesterone increases the flow of blood to your baby, resulting in lower blood pressure and reduced blood flow to your brain - giving you the dizzy feeling all over. You can also experience nose bleeds.



## Can i eat seafood?

Yes, as long as it has been thoroughly cooked. for example, Mussels, lobster, crab, oysters, scallops, clams and pre-cooked prawns.



## Can I dye my hair?

Most research shows that it is safe to dye or colour your hair while pregnant. Although, the chemicals in permanent and semi-permanent hair dyes may cause harm, if used in very high doses. When you use hair dye, you are only exposed to very low amounts of these chemicals. The first trimester is a critical time for your baby's growth. To be extra cautious, wait until the second trimester to start dyeing your hair.



## When do most women go into labor?

The average length of pregnancy is 40 weeks. But, it is just that - an average. Most women go into labor between 38 and 41 weeks of their pregnancy.

