

WHAT TO DO AND EXPECT DURING CHILDBIRTH IN THE HOSPITAL

Mother

This is the day when the child will be born. This is definitely a challenge if this is the first child. The mother tries to plan everything before going to the hospital but not everything goes as planned!



Bag for hospital

Make sure to load the bag with comfortable dresses, socks, slippers, a light cardigan, hygienic products, baby's cloth, blanket, diaper, wipe, etc.

People around

Make sure that the people at home will survive three days. Keep colleagues informed that you may need to run in moment's notice.

Count contraction

There might be light contractions in the last month. If water breaks or there are frequent contractions, start timing the – how long do they last, how frequently are they coming. It might be useful to the doctor.

Father

The father is generally scared if this is the first baby. A lot of wondering around goes on. The father sometimes feels helpless, especially given that he is not feeling the baby inside the tummy.



People around

Keep colleagues informed. Make sure that the home will run smoothly in absence of two adults. Arrange baby sitter or schedule with relatives who will be able to take care if there are kids at home. The father generally gets a chance to come home once a day to pick things up.

Take care

Make sure all the necessary insurance and paperwork are with you. It is good to be mentally prepared for a C-section. With a C-section, Dear Mom will be in dream-state for a while. Mom may remain in hazy and foggy state for even two days. Dear Dad is the acting captain at that time. Nothing to be scared of; nurses will take care of the baby.

DAY 1 (The Birthday)

MOTHER

PRELIMINARIES

- Be prepared for major changes --- psychological, mental, and physical.
- Hubby is allowed to be in the operation room. You will be able to hold his hands.
- You will hear the crying baby after the birth.
- There will be no pain during childbirth if it is a C-section; there will be a lot of exercise if it is natural.
- If natural, healing will be very fast afterwards.

NO FOOD BEFORE A SURGERY

- I ate a banana after my water broke before going to the hospital, just to make sure that I am not hungry on the operating table. Guess what, I had to take a syrup that almost made me puke before the surgery. ☹️

BREASTFEDING

- Breastfeeding starts right after mom and the baby are transferred to the cabin. Mother's fatigue and child's lack of interest to breastfeed, all together, can make breastfeeding a stressful experience.
- Hospitals have lactation specialist. Make sure to ask for a lactation specialist on the first day.
- I won't push breastfeeding too much if the baby is born a bit early or has lesser weight than average. Nurses will suggest whatever is appropriate!

FOOD AND WATER

- If C-section, mom is allowed to chew ice chips when thirsty instead of water, after the surgery. Hospital will provide food.

FATHER

PRELIMINARIES

- Make sure that there is enough space left in the camera or in the phone for photos.
- Make sure that the fuel tank of the car is full. The basic idea is to make sure that it is possible to go to the hospital in a very short notice. Minutes and seconds matter in many cases.
- Plan your routes. Keep an eye on google live traffic.
- You will hear the crying baby after the birth. You will hold the baby for the first time. You will see how the nurses are cleaning the baby.

ACCEPT ALL THE HELP

- When relatives and friends offer any help, accept without any hesitation. It can be some cookies, it can be an offer to bring dinner for you, or it might be the willingness of a relative to stay in hospital for a few hours. Whatever it is, accept it.
- If C-section, mom will be dizzy for some time. It may be a good idea to let the nurses take care of the baby and take him to the nursery.

BREASTFEDING

- Breastfeeding starts right after mom and the baby are transferred to the cabin. If the baby's weight is above average, it is better to keep attempting breastfeeding.
- Generally the baby is not in severe need of food yet. The hunger comes from the third day. Therefore, the first day is a good time to habituate breastfeeding. The dad assists mom in breastfeeding! Of course, mother-in-law can help but keep in mind that in-laws will not be in your home for long. It is better to become familiar with the softness of an infant from the very first day.

DAY 2

MOTHER

- Mother feels a lot better if the delivery was normal.
- After C-section effect is still there. There may be more pain than the first day. Make sure to tell the nurses and the doctors if there is pain.
- Let the nurses know if dizziness is still there. The pain-killer dose might be just incorrect based on your height and weight.
- Do not assume that everything is fine just because you are in a hospital. Tell nurses and doctors about any discomfort you feel. They will tell you whether it is normal or not.
- Do as much breastfeeding and skin-to-skin as you can. If you are lucky, this is not a weekend and your lactation specialist will stop by. Ask for any tips. Sometimes lactation specialists bring in a weighing machine to check the weight of the baby before and after breastfeeding. This is to check if the baby was able to breastfeed.
- Weight of the baby will start to drop drastically. An eight pound baby can easily become a seven pound baby in two days after birth.
- Mother will have bleeding similar to heavy period.

FATHER

- If it is possible to manage some time, quickly go home, have a shower, drop and bring some necessary items to and from home.
- Take a power nap if there is someone to accompany mom in the hospital.
- Become familiar with infant's diaper change.
- Take as many pictures as you can. Some hospitals allow professional photographers to come in and take photos. While printed versions might be a bit expensive, digital versions can be more affordable and between \$100 to \$200, with full copyright access.
- Make sure to ask for a footprint of the baby (on a special paper). This is for memory.
- Make sure that the baby has the hand- or leg-band with ID all the time. Hospitals now-a-days provide a blood sample of the baby in a small pouch that preserves DNA for decades. Hope no family ever needs to use it.
- No need to assume that the hospital is the safest place. When we were there, we felt that there are too much security measures, of course for the good of everyone, but that scared us a bit.

DAY 3

MOTHER

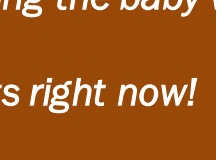
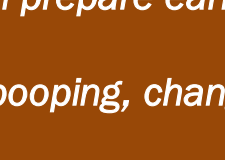
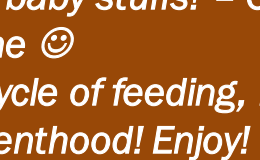
- The baby starts to become hungrier. If the lactation specialist did not get a chance to stop by, ask for feeding tips to the nurses.
- If it was a C-section, the bandage will be removed today. Do not get scared when you see the C-section scar.
- You will have a shower after the removal of the bandage. Ask nurses to help if you have trouble in moving without pain.
- The heavy bleeding continues. Actually, the bleeding may remain more than a month.
- Postpartum swelling is very common. Mother's fingers and ankles may remain swollen as long as a week. Although it is normal to have a postpartum swelling, make sure to call your doctor if the pain in legs is too bad or if there is a serious headache. These are symptoms of high blood pressure, which can be caused by a blood clot.
- You will be leaving the hospital tomorrow. Ask nurses and doctors any question you have. Make sure to collect information about pediatricians in the town while you are in the hospital.
- Today nurses may test the hearing ability of your baby. They bring a machine and put a headphone-like thing around the baby's ears. The machine reads brain-waves, so and so forth. From the brain-waves, the machine can tell if the hearing was fine.

FATHER

- Fill out necessary forms for baby's birth certificate. Note that you will receive one birth-document from the hospital but the official birth certificate comes from the county office or state. If you fill out all the necessary forms for the birth certificate while in the hospital, you will be able to save a lot of paperwork later.
- Make sure to fill out forms for the baby's social security number. Again, you can do it later with many proofs and documents but it is easier to allow the hospital to send the necessary documents with the form you fill out.
- Learn from nurses how to feed the baby, how frequently should you feed, what brands of infant food are recommended, and any question you may have, no matter how mundane they sound.
- Notice very carefully how nurses help the mother while feeding the baby, dressing the baby, and how to help the baby burp. Burping is crucial. It took me weeks to learn the art of helping an infant burp.
- In some states it is mandatory for the hospitals to check the car seat that will be used to carry the baby home. Make sure to ask nurses if they will check the car seat today or tomorrow before you leave. Local fire stations also check if a car seat is installed properly – free of charge.
- Nurses kept track of mom's medicines so far. Learn what medication is given for what purpose so that when you go home, you know which medications are critical – like painkillers.

DAY 4

- You all will go home today!
- Make sure to ask for whatever you need for today. Nurses will give you a few items like a few bottles of baby food, wipes, and tissues.
- Mother should feel a lot better today but swelling and bleeding will still be there.
- Drive safe back home.
- After everyone is safely back home and has settled down a bit, the father needs to go for shopping to buy baby stuffs! – Or, you can prepare early, assuming the baby will arrive on time, not ahead of time ☺️
- The two hours cycle of feeding, burping, pooping, changing starts right now!
- Welcome to parenthood! Enjoy!



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