

Your Birth, Your Way.

THE ULTIMATE BIRTH PREFERENCES GUIDE

A thoughtful, printable guide to help you explore your options, ask informed questions, and share what matters most with your birth team.

Created by What The Bump CLT
Birth & Postpartum Doula Support | Charlotte, North Carolina

Your preferences matter. So does flexibility.

A birth preferences plan is a conversation tool, not a script or a guarantee. You can change your mind at any point, and your care team may recommend a different approach when circumstances change.

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Before you write your plan

Start with your priorities. Choose what feels important, then review the details with your OB-GYN or midwife. Ask which options are available at your birth location and what may change if medical needs arise.

5 conversations worth having

- ☐ What does a typical admission and labor process look like here?
- ☐ Which comfort measures and pain-relief options are available?
- ☐ How are induction, monitoring, and cesarean decisions discussed?
- ☐ What are your usual practices for immediate newborn care?
- ☐ How can my partner and doula participate in supporting me?

A simple framework for decisions

BRAIN: Benefits, Risks, Alternatives, Intuition/individual priorities, and Nothing for now (when waiting is medically reasonable). Ask how urgent a decision is and what happens if you take a moment to discuss it.

A note on informed consent

You can ask questions, request explanations, and discuss alternatives. Some situations require quick decisions; your care team can explain the medical reason and urgency.

My three biggest priorities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Things I want my team to know

Examples: previous birth experiences, communication preferences, sensory needs, cultural considerations, or worries you would like your team to understand.

Labor & comfort preferences

Check any items you would like to discuss. These are preferences, not requests that must be followed regardless of circumstances.

Environment & support

- ☐ Partner/support person present when permitted
- ☐ Doula present when permitted
- ☐ Dim lighting / quiet room / music
- ☐ Freedom to move and change positions when safe
- ☐ Explain procedures before they happen whenever possible
- ☐ Limit nonessential visitors or interruptions

Comfort & pain relief

- ☐ Try movement, breathing, shower, massage, or counterpressure
- ☐ Use a birth ball or peanut ball if available
- ☐ Discuss nitrous oxide or IV pain medication if available
- ☐ Interested in an epidural
- ☐ Prefer to delay medication, but remain open to it
- ☐ No strong preference - decide during labor

Monitoring & interventions

- ☐ Discuss intermittent vs. continuous fetal monitoring when appropriate
- ☐ Ask about mobility with monitoring equipment
- ☐ Discuss options before breaking my water
- ☐ Discuss benefits, risks, and alternatives before starting or increasing oxytocin
- ☐ Discuss eating/drinking policies and what is medically appropriate

Additional notes

Birth & newborn preferences

Pushing & delivery

- ☐ Try different pushing positions when safe
- ☐ Follow my own urge to push when appropriate
- ☐ Discuss coached pushing if recommended
- ☐ Warm compresses or other perineal support when appropriate
- ☐ Partner may help announce the baby or cut the cord if possible

Immediately after birth

- ☐ Skin-to-skin as soon as medically appropriate
- ☐ Discuss delayed cord clamping when appropriate
- ☐ Support early feeding (breast/chestfeeding or formula)
- ☐ Rooming-in when possible
- ☐ Explain routine newborn assessments and medications before they are given

If a cesarean becomes necessary

- ☐ Explain what is happening and why
- ☐ Support person present when permitted
- ☐ Ask about a clear drape or seeing the baby at delivery
- ☐ Skin-to-skin in the operating/recovery area when feasible
- ☐ Help with early feeding and keeping baby with a support person if separated

Questions for my newborn care team

- ☐ What are your hospital policies for vitamin K, eye ointment, and newborn screening?
- ☐ What happens if my baby needs extra observation or NICU care?

Other preferences

My one-page birth preferences

Bring this summary to a prenatal appointment and share it with your birth team. Keep it brief and update it as needed.

Name: _____ Due date: _____

Provider / birth location: _____

Support people: _____

My top three priorities

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

During labor, I would appreciate

- ☐ Clear explanations and time for questions when possible
- ☐ Movement and position changes when safe
- ☐ Support with comfort measures
- ☐ Discussion of pain-relief choices as labor progresses

My pain relief preference

- ☐ Interested in unmedicated coping
- ☐ Interested in epidural
- ☐ Undecided / flexible

After birth, if medically appropriate

- ☐ Skin-to-skin
- ☐ Delayed cord clamping
- ☐ Early feeding support
- ☐ Keep baby with me when possible

If plans change, what matters most to me is:

Remember: This is a starting point for shared decision-making, not a substitute for individualized medical advice.

You deserve support, whatever birth looks like.

Birth can be unpredictable. Your preferences can help your team understand what matters to you, while leaving room for informed decisions as things unfold.

A doula can help you prepare questions, explore comfort measures, and feel supported alongside your partner and clinical team. A doula does not replace your medical provider or make medical decisions for you.

What The Bump CLT

Birth & postpartum doula support in Charlotte, NC and surrounding communities.

Learn more or request a free consultation:

www.whatthebumpclt.com

A few reminders

- ☐ Review preferences with your provider before labor.
- ☐ Check what is offered at your hospital or birth center.
- ☐ Bring one printed copy and keep a photo on your phone.
- ☐ Give yourself permission to change your mind.

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