

Choosing a Childbirth Class

What to Consider When Looking for a Childbirth Class

A good childbirth class can not only prepare you for labor, it can expand your personal philosophy of birth, lessen your fears and, most importantly, build your confidence in yourself and your body. It is a good idea to contact a childbirth educator or two to find out what their classes are like before you sign up.

Questions you might want to ask an educator:

- Are you certified to teach childbirth classes?
- What do you believe are the most important ways a woman can prepare for a healthy, safe, and satisfying birth?
- Is a specific childbirth method taught? If so, what is the method and how does it work?
- What topics are covered? (see list at right)
- Will my partner learn how to play an active role in labor and birth?
- Does the class help participants create their own birth plans?
- What is the class style?
- How big is the class?
- How often will the class meet?
- What is the time and location?

A childbirth class should cover the following:

- The normal, natural process of labor and birth, and health-care practices that support it
- Changes during late pregnancy and the stages of labor
- A wide variety of coping strategies for managing pain in labor
- The importance of labor support
- Movement and positioning during labor and birth
- Medical interventions and their indications, risks and alternatives
- How to communicate with your health-care provider
- Developing a birth plan
- Breastfeeding and newborn care

Tips:

- It may be tempting to sign up for an intensive day-long or weekend session, but there are many benefits to a course that meets five or six times over the span of a few weeks. These benefits include having more time to absorb the information and getting to know other people who are approaching parenthood.
- Be wary if the childbirth instructor simply presents hospital rules. A good instructor is an advocate who shares all of the information you need to make truly informed decisions.
- Make sure your partner knows that you need his or her presence in class just as you will need it in labor.
- You'll likely get the most out of a small childbirth class; it will be more personalized and will allow for more questions and answers. Private classes are also available for couples with complicated schedules.