

# YOUR RIGHTS AS A CHILDBEARING WOMAN

## Particularly in a Hospital Setting

There are a lot of women that feel like they are/were forced into decisions by care providers or medical staff because of “hospital policy” and they have/had no choice.

But you are an individual, with specific needs and desires that might not fit perfectly into their policies. Understanding your rights helps you become your own advocate.

### #1 **Every woman has the right to leave her maternity caregiver and select another if she becomes dissatisfied with her care.**

One of the factors of having an unmedicated birth hinges on you feeling safe, comfortable, heard and understood by your care provider.

### #2 **While in labor you can ask for a different nurse.**

If the nurse assigned to attend you is not supportive of your birth preferences, or your personalities aren't meshing well, or whatever reason; you can request a different nurse.

### #3 **Every woman has the right to freedom of movement during labor, unencumbered by tubes, wires, or other apparatus. And to birth in any position she wants.**

If mother and baby are low risk there is no reason she should be hooked up to monitors constantly. Request intermittent monitoring where the baby is only monitored for 20 minutes an hour.

\*\*You also have the right to give birth in the position of your choice.

### #4 **Every woman has the right to receive full advance information about RISKS and BENEFITS of all reasonably available methods for relieving pain during labor and birth, including methods that do not require the use of drugs.**

She has the right to choose which methods will be used and to change her mind at any time.

### #5 **Every woman has the right to have family members and friends of her choice present (or not present) during all aspects of her maternity care.**

Like a doula, photographer, mother, or whomever you want and feel comfortable with. We recommend inviting people who you know will be a support and comfort to you. People who you feel safe with, people who will help you achieve your birthing goals.

### #6 **Every woman has the right to accept or refuse procedures, drugs, tests, and treatments, and to have her choices honored.**

If you feel your rights are being violated it's important you speak up.

### #7 **Every woman has the right to wear whatever she wants while she is admitted to the hospital.**

You can wear your favorite T-shirt, a robe, a Dear Darby labor gown, or be completely naked. It's 100% up to you.

**#8 Every woman has the right to information about the professional identity and qualifications of those involved with her care, and to know when those involved are trainees.**

Not only do you have a right to know qualifications but you can ask a care provider their C-section rate, their episiotomy rate, their unmedicated delivery rate, etc. This information can be very revealing as to what kind of birth you can likely expect with that particular care provider.

**#9 Every woman has the right to full and clear information about benefits, risks, and costs of the procedures, drugs, tests, and treatments offered to her. As well as all other reasonable options, including no intervention.**

That means you can request and receive information about all interventions that are likely to be offered during labor and birth, well before the onset of labor.

Sometimes while in labor things are suggested or offered or presented like it's your only option but it's important for you to get all of the information so you can make an educated decision.

**#10 Every woman has the right to be informed if her caregivers wish to enroll her or her infant in a research study.**

She should receive full information about all known and possible benefits and risks of participation; and she has the right to decide whether to participate, free from coercion and without negative consequences.

**#11 Every woman has the right to unrestricted access to all available records about her pregnancy, birth, postpartum, and her infant; to obtain a full copy of these records; and to receive help in understanding them if necessary.**

**#12 Every woman has the right to receive maternity care that is appropriate to her cultural and religious background, and to receive information in a language in which she can communicate.**

**#13 Every woman has the right to receive continuous social, emotional, and physical support during labor and birth from a caregiver who has been trained in labor support.**

Here is my plug for doulas! I have never met an OB or even a midwife in a hospital setting that provided continuous support in any area. But guess who does?? DOULAS!! And going along with your rights, if you have hired a doula you have the right to have her with you providing that continuous support.

**#14 Every woman has the right to virtually uninterrupted contact with her newborn from the moment of birth, as long as she and her baby are healthy and do not need care that requires separation**

**#15 Every woman has the right to receive complete information about the benefits of breastfeeding well in advance of labor, to refuse supplemental bottles and other actions that interfere with breastfeeding, and to have access to skilled lactation support for as long as she chooses to breastfeed.**

**#16 Every woman has the right to decide collaboratively with caregivers when she and her baby will leave the birth site for home, based on their conditions and circumstances.**

Source: <http://www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/maternal-health/the-rights-of-childbearing-women.pdf>