

## 10 Questions to Ask When Choosing Your Care Provider

- 1 What is my role in helping to achieve a safe and healthy birth?** This is an important question that will help you determine whether your care provider will be respectful of your choices and invite your input. By being an active and attentive participant in pregnancy, labor and birth, you can help achieve the best outcomes for you and your baby.
- 2 What standard routine practices should I expect in labor?** This information will help you identify any practices that your care provider may see as needed or routine. Many practices aren't always necessary, including: C-sections; electronic fetal monitoring; epidurals; episiotomy (surgically cutting the area between the vagina and the anus, called the "perineum," in order to make the vaginal opening larger); induced labor; restricting women from eating and drinking freely; restricting movement; directed pushing; and, separating mom and baby.
- 3 How will you work with me as your patient to identify mine and my baby's unique needs?** You and your baby's unique needs should be front and center throughout pregnancy, labor and birth. Ask your care provider about what's negotiable and what's not. Weigh the answers you get; they will give you good insight into whether you've found a good match.
- 4 How do you feel about me bringing someone like a doula for one-on-one support?** A continuous support partner, such as a doula, can help you navigate your labor, support good decision-making and help make sure you're able to communicate your wishes to your health care provider. Keep in mind, some health care providers may not agree to the use of a continuous support partner, such as a doula. Be prepared to ask "why not?"
- 5 What is your rate for C-sections? What are the main reasons you perform them? Is there anything you know about me and my baby that might suggest I would need a C-section?** More and more babies are being delivered by cesarean, even when there's not a good medical reason to do so. One of the best ways to reduce your chances of a C-section is to give birth in a location, and with a provider, that maintains low cesarean rates.
- 6 Do you limit the length of labor? Or will you support continuing labor as long as my baby and I are doing OK?** It's important for you to find out if your care provider will give your body and your baby time to move the process along, and let nature take its course.
- 7 How often do you perform inductions? What are the main reasons you perform them? Is there anything you know about me and my baby that might suggest I would need an induction?** Labor should only be induced if it is more risky for your baby to remain inside than to be born. Studies have consistently shown your risk of having a C-section nearly doubles with induction with your first labor. It also increases your baby's chance of being born premature. Your best chance of avoiding an induction is by finding a provider who uses them sparingly.
- 8 How will you monitor the baby's heartbeat during labor?** Talk with your health care provider about whether they use intermittent listening so you can move freely, relax between contractions, and avoid the anxiety that comes with being tied to a machine, which is the case when using electronic fetal monitoring (EFM).
- 9 Will I be able to move around during labor, or will I be confined to bed? In what position will I be giving birth?** Movement is a natural and active way of responding to the pain of childbirth. When it comes time to push, staying off your back and pushing with your natural urges can be key to making it as easy as possible on you and your baby. Find out if your health care provider will encourage you to stay mobile.
- 10 Will my baby be kept in the nursery or in my room?** Research has shown that it's best for mom and her healthy baby to stay together after birth. Talk to your care provider and ask if they support "rooming-in," which will maximize your time with your little one, as well as opportunities for breastfeeding.