

Introduction: Birth—As Safe and Healthy As It Can Be

Let's face it—birth isn't easy. Many mothers proudly claim it is the most challenging work they have ever accomplished. But the truth is you have everything you need to accomplish this everyday miracle.



The Six Lamaze Healthy Birth Practices can help you have a safer and healthier birth.

While no one can promise you what kind of birth experience you will have, common sense tells us and research confirms that there are two tried-and-true ways to make birth as safe and healthy as possible.

- First, make choices that support and assist your natural ability to give birth.
- Second, avoid practices that work against your body's natural ability, unless there is a good medical reason for them.

It makes sense that we should help our bodies with the amazing work of giving birth, rather than make the process more difficult and complicated. However, along with all the life-saving benefits modern labor and delivery units provide, many of today's routine practices and high-tech interventions can actually slow down labor, increase pain, cause unnecessary stress for babies, and make cesarean surgery more likely. Women and their care providers can make labor simpler and safer by following the *Six Lamaze Healthy Birth Practices*.



Print PDF: Choosing a Care Provider

How to choose the midwife or doctor who will best support you during pregnancy, labor, and birth

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Six Simple Ways to Have a Safer and Healthier Birth

Lamaze International, the leading childbirth education and advocacy organization, has used recommendations from the World Health Organization to develop the Six Lamaze Healthy Birth Practices that support and assist a woman's ability to give birth. Years of research have proven that each of these practices increases safety for mothers and babies.

The Six Lamaze Healthy Birth Practices

1. Let labor begin on its own.
2. Walk, move around, and change positions throughout labor.
3. Bring a loved one, friend, or doula for continuous support.
4. Avoid interventions that are not medically necessary.
5. Avoid giving birth on your back, and follow your body's urges to push.
6. Keep your baby with you—it's best for you, your baby, and breastfeeding.

Your Birth Team

The people who are with you during labor and birth can make the process easier or more difficult, depending on how well they care for you. Make sure you choose your care provider and other labor support companions carefully, and choose a birth setting whose staff is supportive of your birth choices. Share your preferences with your birth team well before labor starts. That way, if necessary, there is time to change to a new provider or arrange for new labor support people who will better support your desires.



Print PDF: Changing Your Care Provider

What to do if you have second thoughts about your choice of care provider.

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