

10 Ways You Can Get Good Maternity Care

1 Know your maternity care rights

Your rights may not be protected if you do not understand and exercise them. Download [The Rights of Childbearing Women](http://bit.ly/maternityrights) (<http://bit.ly/maternityrights>).

2 Choose your caregiver and birth setting wisely

These choices set into motion other choices that you may find you have less control over. There are good and bad caregivers and good and bad hospitals and birth centers through out this country. Check the quality of the options in your area, and aim to find caregivers you trust and a safe, family-friendly birth setting. Learn more about choosing a [caregiver](http://bit.ly/choosingacaregiver) (<http://bit.ly/choosingacaregiver>) and [birth setting](http://bit.ly/birthsetting) (<http://bit.ly/birthsetting>).

3 Take responsibility for your health during pregnancy

This means eating well and exercising, learning as much as you can about pregnancy and birth, and working with your caregiver to get the care you need when you need it.

4 Ask about the evidence

Tests and procedures are very common in pregnancy and birth, but often there's no research to support their use. Sometimes, the research even suggests the interventions are harmful. Ask what the research says, and [learn how to understand research findings](http://bit.ly/ccresearch) (<http://bit.ly/ccresearch>).

5 Expect personalized information

If your care provider recommends a test, procedure, medication, or surgery, take time to learn what it involves and the likely benefits and harms for you and your baby. Learn more about making the informed decisions that are right for you.

6 Think about what is important to you, and communicate this to your care team

Your preferences and values matter. In maternity care there is rarely one “right” choice. Usually there are several choices, each with their own potential benefits and harms. You are the one who should decide which benefits and harms matter most to you.



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7 Keep a copy of your care records, and make sure the information in them is complete and accurate Your health record is an important way for your caregivers to communicate with each other, so if the information is wrong or missing, you could be in danger of unsafe or inappropriate care. You have a right to access or keep a copy of your complete health record, and many women find it empowering to do so.

8 Arrange the best labor support possible Good support goes a long way to help you cope with the physical and emotional challenges of labor. Continuous labor support from a knowledgeable companion like a doula also has surprising health benefits. Such support has been shown to decrease the chance of a c-section, the need for pain medication, and feelings of dissatisfaction about the birth. **Find out more about these and other benefits of labor support** (<http://bit.ly/laborsupport>).

9 Learn as much as you can about labor, birth, and postpartum before you get there Labor is challenging. So are the first days and weeks of motherhood. Trying to learn new information to make choices about your care in labor or after giving birth can be difficult. Be prepared by taking a high-quality childbirth education class if possible. Trustworthy books, videos and web sites can also help you understand your care options. Learn **how to find a childbirth education class** (<http://bit.ly/childbirthedu>) and see a list of **recommended resources** (<http://bit.ly/ccresources>).

10 Give your caregivers and hospital or birth center feedback about your care Birth professionals and birth facilities should always work to do better. You can help them improve care for future women and families by telling them what you liked and didn't like about your care experience.



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