

A close-up photograph of a hand gently resting on a pregnant belly. The belly is wrapped in a patterned cloth with large, stylized floral designs in shades of purple, pink, and white. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

*Creating*  
YOUR

**JOYFUL  
PREGNANCY**

AND BIRTH

Dr. Alison DiBarto

*Program, Plan, and Prepare  
your body and mind for  
a beautiful journey!*

*The*  
**JOYFUL  
PREGNANCY**  
*Workbook*

By Dr. Alison DiBarto

## *Welcome to the Joyful Pregnancy Workbook!*

My goal is to inspire and educate other women on creating the peaceful and joyful pregnancy and birth that they desire. Use this workbook to challenge your thoughts and beliefs and to grow and look for what you want in your birth. As we journey through this workbook, I think it is important to say that I support all types of birth, at home or at the hospital but I would also like to tell you what brought me to writing this and share my story of my daughter's birth.

Pregnancy is both a wonderful and scary time for a woman. I was twenty-three years old when I became pregnant with my first child while attending chiropractic school and living far from my hometown. Though I was engaged, I didn't have anyone to turn to for the support I needed and who had the answers to my questions. When I scheduled an appointment to see my regular OB/GYN she was booked so I saw her partner in the practice instead. He spent most of the visit ridiculing me when I asked questions and treated me as an unmarried adolescent who didn't understand how she became pregnant. He especially loathed when I asked questions about natural birth and laughed when I asked about having a doula present. He told me that he rarely, if ever, has had a first time mom have a natural birth. He said it was impossible. I always left feeling horrible and depressed.

I started interviewing every woman I met about her experience with pregnancy and childbirth. I always believed that if I was ever to become pregnant I wanted to be drugged with an epidural the second the blue line appeared on the stick and wake up nine months later with a baby. I never wanted the experience of birth or pregnancy. I was terrified of the pain, stretch marks, morning sickness and the violation of privacy during birth. At that time I was working for a chiropractor who said she gave birth at home. She said she had a doctor and a great coach and loved being home.

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My first reaction was, “she is crazy!” I had never heard of a home birth and I thought it had to be illegal and dangerous.

As I talked to more women, all having different types of births (home, hospital, natural, cesarean) I realized something. I saw how women who birthed in the hospital or refused to educate themselves and followed standard protocol shared horror stories. The more painful, long, angry, disastrous the story, the more they seemed eager to tell. These women couldn't wait to tell me how horrible it was to give birth, how painful, and how their doctors, nurses and hospital staff treated them like worthless animals. They fought to assure me natural birth was impossible.

When I spoke with women who birthed at home I saw a completely different picture. It was a picture of peace, love, power, and happiness. Whether the birth lasted one hour or thirty-two, the women still couldn't hold back their pleasure of a home birth, especially un-medicated. They had midwives or a doctor present who respected them and their bodies. These women read all the books, took hypnobirthing classes, and spent time learning about the joyful process of birth, rather than just accepting their doctors' orders.

I called the only doctor in Saint Louis who attended home births, Dr. Duhart and made an appointment. He was kind, gentle, and supportive. He entertained my questions with gentle and loving humor and assured me that I was more than capable of having a natural childbirth at home. His history of delivering babies at home since the early seventies gave me the comfort and security I needed. I left feeling confident and excited for my day of birth. While I did have many moments of doubt, fear, and utter disbelief at my ability to handle the apparent pain and the process, I worked to research them out of my mind. I never stopped reading and became very proactive about natural and home birth while pregnant. My biggest support came in the form of Ina May's books. Through her writing I could feel the power of all the women who had ever given birth supporting me and my decisions. Her stories helped me know that I could achieve what I wanted.

Many people I met did not approve of my home birth decision. I was told more horror stories to scare me into going to the hospital from other mothers. In my heart I knew their story and why it happened to them and I knew the story I wanted to have and how to create it. While this may sound like it was an easy and confident decision to make, I had many struggles along the way. I lost one of my brothers to suicide when I was 36 weeks pregnant. I flew home to my family and during the funeral many members of my family noted how the baby was dropping and I would probably deliver in Ohio. I prayed that I would, giving myself the excuse to go to the hospital, get an epidural, and maybe even a cesarean. It would be easier and I would have a way out of a natural birth that I was still intimidated by. The flight back to St. Louis seemed like a flight to certain failure but I had to work through my fears and the grief of my recent loss.

The night I went into labor I had gone grocery shopping figuring I would have enough time while in labor to make Dr. Duhart soup and food. After all, I was told to scrapbook and stay at home because first time mom's labored for hours. I called Dr. Duhart over around midnight, two hours after my labor started, and got the bed and room ready. I went for a walk and took a shower. When Dr. Duhart arrived at 1am, he wanted to know if I thought I was in labor. I told him I wasn't sure but it felt real and when he checked I was already at 8cm! I got into bed with my favorite T-shirt on and finished giving birth two hours later. Dr. Duhart rubbed pressure points on my feet, performed acupuncture and coached me the whole time. When we found out Ava had flipped while I was in labor from head down to butt down, we were all concerned but he assured me I could finish. At one point I told Dr. Duhart I couldn't do it anymore and he laughed and said, 'all you women say that but you always make it through.' That made me feel better and it also made me laugh. I can't say it was pain free but I can say it was amazing and wonderful. Ava Gianna was born at 3:39 in the morning after five and ½ hours of labor. She weighed seven pounds, eight ounces and was twenty inches long. She was also born frank breech, meaning her butt came out first. I never

thought that I would be able to describe Ava's birth as wonderful, incredible, beautiful, strong, powerful, and perfect. After Ava was born I thought to myself 'I could do this every day'! This was nothing like anyone had ever described and I couldn't have asked for a better story.

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# PRE-BABY STEPS

Trying to have a baby is exciting, but information on when and how to get pregnant can be overwhelming. The optimal time to start thinking about preparing your body and mind for pregnancy is six to twelve months prior to trying to conceive. Let's examine the basics and review some physiology.

## *Step 1: Charting Your Signs*

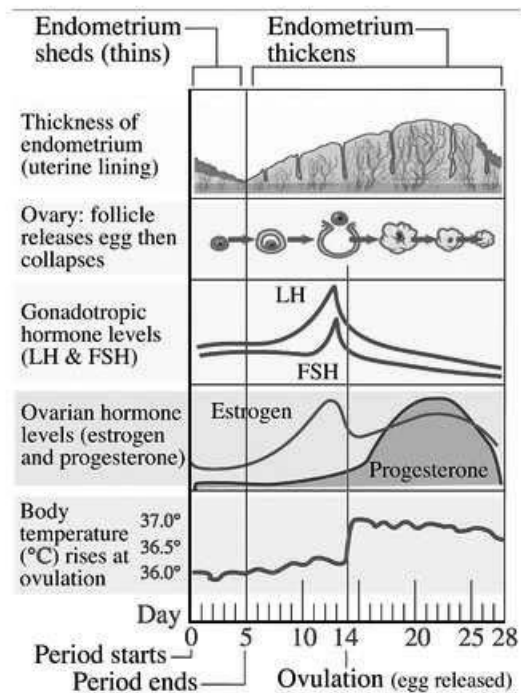
The best starting points for becoming pregnant are your fertility signs. Begin by charting your three basic fertility signs; waking basal temperature, cervical fluid, cervical position. We will review the basics of charting here, but do not use this as a solitary guide, especially if using this as a birth control method. Taking a class on using this method correctly will help you recognize inconsistencies with your cycle and help you achieve pregnancy more quickly.

Recommended fertility reading: *Taking Charge Of Your Fertility* by Toni Weschler. This book will walk you through all aspects of charting, has pictures and examples to help you understand your chart. Visit her website at [www.TCOYF.com](http://www.TCOYF.com) to download free charts and learn more about her book.

Women are often misguided about the physiology of their menstrual cycle. We are taught that our cycle lasts 28 days and we ovulate on day 14. When we are unable to become pregnant we may jump to conclusions about our health, fertility, sexual ability, or even our partner. The best tool for improving fertility and your ability to conceive is education! Learning about your body, your cycle, and your hormones will only help you. Charting will decrease guessing times, reduce worry about fertility, and give your doctor a tool to work with your body to optimize fertility.

Our 'cycle' begins on day 1 of our period. A menstrual cycle can last anywhere from 3-10 days. Women ovulate, or release an egg from their ovary, anywhere from 10 days to even 30 days after their cycle begins. Lastly, the total number of days ranges variably from 20 to 40 days. There is no 'normal' cycle or definitive 'rules' to due dates and days of ovulation.

The following graph shows the events that happen during a woman's cycle. Around day 14 there is an increase of luteinizing



hormone (LH) and follicle stimulating hormone (FSH) that causes the ovary to release an egg. These hormones stimulate the release of an egg from the ovary, and also an increase in waking temperature. Estrogen peaks at ovulation and then decreases as progesterone builds the lining of the uterus. The first day of our cycle is noted as the first day of menstruation. If there is no pregnancy than progesterone levels will drop, causing your period to start.

Charting your fertility signs is the best way to determine how your cycle and hormones are functioning. As previously mentioned, the three major signs to track are waking basal temperature, cervical fluid, and cervical position. This is a completely different method than the rhythm method. Using the rhythm method is a way to approximate your dates of ovulation and avoiding the times that you may potentially be releasing an egg. This method only works for those who are ovulating on day 14 and have a 28 day cycle.

This method is unreliable while charting is very accurate if you follow the rules.

The most popular and easiest sign to monitor is temperature. Take your temperature every morning at the same time using a basal thermometer. Do not move, go to the bathroom, or do anything before taking it! Make sure that you have gotten more than three hours of sleep. Also, know that alcohol will usually raise your temperature reading. Mark the temperature down each day or circle your temperature on a chart. The morning that your temperature has shifted dramatically up, you know that you ovulated the day before. The temperature shift is due to an increase in our Luteinizing hormone (LH) that causes ovulation. The chances of becoming pregnant decrease steadily after your temperature change because you have already released the egg. The egg has now already started to travel and will not be able to be fertilized once out of the fallopian tubes.

It is important to read and learn more about this technique. Not all women have the same temperature shifts and there can be many normal variations. Temperature changes will also show potential problems. The thyroid, adrenal, hypothalamus, pituitary, and ovaries have a large impact on the flow and function of hormones, and charting will help narrow down which organ is interfering with hormone signals.

The second sign to track is your cervical fluid. Women's fluid changes over the month. After our period it can be non-existent, or dry. As we near ovulation the fluid changes to become more egg-like, slippery and stretchy. This is not a vaginal infection but a way to assist sperm on their way to the egg. After ovulation the fluid can become thick and sticky. Notice the changes and know that the slippery fluid is more likely to promote fertilization and is correlated with the time of ovulation.

Finally, the consistency and position of a woman's cervix changes during her cycle. The cervix will become more soft and pliable

during ovulation and also rise up further into the body. To check the position of the cervix you will insert one or two fingers vaginally until you can feel your cervix. Some women find squatting or laying on the floor is the most comfortable position. Some women are uncomfortable with monitoring this sign, others are not, so don't worry if you choose to skip this method. However, if you are not willing to check this sign make sure to monitor the other two diligently.

Charting is important because it can help you and your doctor discover hormone problems, thyroid disorders, and reasons why ovulation occurs or doesn't occur. The main purpose of charting is to correlate your symptoms to determine the best time to plan intercourse during your ovulation. Track your signs for at least three months to have a good overview of how your body is functioning. Correlate all of your signs on a chart to determine your most fertile days. Now you know when to take the opportunity to conceive!

#### **How to maximize ovulation:**

1. Intercourse should occur within the five days prior to date of ovulation.
  - a. An egg can survive from 12 to 24 hours after being released and sperm can survive at most 5 days, which gives you anywhere from 1 to 6 days of fertility.
2. Purchase an ovulation kit from your local drugstore. This is like a pregnancy test but can tell you the days you are ovulating.
3. If you lack cervical fluid, using a room temperature egg white as lubricant can assist the sperm. Store brand lubricants have the ability to kill or impede sperm, as well as saliva. To ensure you are using a sperm-friendly brand check out [preseed.com](http://preseed.com) or [conceiveplus.com](http://conceiveplus.com) for more information.

#### **Common Mistakes with charting:**

1. Stress will delay the timing of ovulation, and therefore delaying your period. If your period is late look back at your chart and notice if any events may have caused a delay in ovulation.
2. Drinking alcohol the night before will raise your temperature and give you a false elevation. Avoid drinking during the time of ovulation to pinpoint the exact day.
3. It is best to get more than three hours of sleep prior to taking your temperature. Achieving at least 7 to 9 hours is best for your body and for charting.
4. Take your temperature the same time every morning, including weekends.
5. Do NOT get up, go to the bathroom, stretch, do any movement prior to taking your temperature.
6. It is important to use a basal thermometer because they are much more sensitive to differences in temperature.
7. Regular periods do not mean that you are ovulating, or ovulating at the same time. Charting will eliminate this challenge.

The next step from here is to start charting! You can download a chart from [www.TCOYF.com](http://www.TCOYF.com) and write in it daily, chart on your computer or online with her programs.

Start charting your fertility signs to track changes now and find potential problems. Charting will also be important to track how your body is normalizing after using birth control and what new patterns your body will follow.

## Step 2: *Preparation Of The Body Through A Nutritional Foundation*

The best pregnancy preparation you can do for your body is through nutrition. A healthy body will create a healthy baby and will also protect your health after your child is born. Setting a good foundation will help prevent bone and joint issues later in life. By increasing your nutritional foundation and building your nutritional stores now, you can possibly prevent post partum depression, osteoporosis, and breastfeeding problems.

This also means cutting out alcohol, smoking, and recreational drug use for both partners. All of these can decrease a man's sperm count, interfere with ovulation and hormone balance, and also damage eggs and the baby. Minimizing chemicals in your diet and environment will protect you from toxicity and fertility problems and also decrease morning sickness while your body works to filter out toxins. Eliminating toxins in your body now will also protect your egg and baby from potential harm during pregnancy as well. Ask yourself a few important questions: what are the reasons I choose to drink or use drugs? How often am I drinking and how would I feel attending social events without drinking? How long will it take to be completely free of alcohol or drugs? Am I willing to invest the time before becoming pregnant, during pregnancy and after while nursing and taking care of a newborn?

Waiting to quit smoking, drinking alcohol, or even coffee until the day you conceive will be incredibly stressful on your mind and body. Take the time to slowly decrease your intake of cigarettes or alcohol until you are at zero. Smoking will not prevent you from gaining too much weight while pregnant, nor will light cigarettes do less harm. All forms of smoking and drinking have the potential and have known toxins that harm the baby during pregnancy.

OTC drugs can also be harmful to the baby. Make sure to check with your physician or midwife before you become pregnant to see if any OTC drugs you use are safe to continue using. Assume all supplements you are taking including supplements, herbs, prescriptions, and general medication are harmful to you and your baby until you have confirmed they are not. This includes drugs for insomnia, pain, colds or flu, and digestive problems.

Through my research, I believe the best diet to follow is the Mediterranean type diet. The basis of this diet is mainly vegetables, lean protein, beans, nuts, and good oils. When you create your meals have 70% of your plate vegetables and protein, 20% complex carbohydrates, and 10% fruit. Use oils such as virgin or extra virgin olive oil and eliminate Omega 6 oils such as corn, soybean, sunflower, and canola oils. Increase the Omega 3's that are found in coldwater fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel) and nuts. You can start taking a fish oil supplement, just make sure it needs to be refrigerated and does not smell like fish! Also increase your daily water intake to half of your body weight in ounces. This means that if you weigh 200 pounds you should drink 100 ounces of water each day. This does not include soda, coffee, juices, or tea, as they can work to dehydrate you. The Mediterranean diet has many heart and health benefits and you can find more information at *Why Can't I Lose Weight Cookbook* by Lorrie Medford, C.N., LDN Publishing 2001 or *Nourishing Traditions: The Cookbook That Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition and the Diet Dictocrats* by Sally Fallon and Mary Enig, PhD, NewTrends Publishing, Inc. 2001

Another item to minimize or avoid would be dairy and meat products that are not organic. These items contain animal hormones and drugs that can be harmful to your body and to your baby. Look for organic milk and grass fed beef. While these may be more expensive, they may also be the key to unlocking your fertility.

Post Partum depression has many causes. One of which is thought to be adrenal fatigue. Our adrenals are our 'stress handling' glands and create stress hormones. After chronic stress, poor diet and lifestyle

choices our adrenals can have difficulty functioning correctly. This leads to illness, depression, and fatigue. For example, when we skip a meal our cortisol (stress hormone) is released so we can keep going and work. Over time, not eating or eating poorly will overwork this gland and we will no longer produce cortisol in healthy levels. While we are pregnant we borrow our baby's stress hormones, which help our body function and can start to feel better. After birth, we no longer have a source of hormones to rely on and can crash. Try increasing your intake of sea salt (not table salt), dark green leafy vegetables, and getting adequate rest. While many people think salt may be harmful to their health, research has shown that only those with organ damage (kidney disease) need to avoid salt and that sea salt does not cause high blood pressure or heart disease. Low salt diets actually contribute to adrenal failure and stress.

### *Step 3: Purification Programs and Weight Release*

Starting with and maintaining a healthy weight prior to and during pregnancy is very important. While preparing for pregnancy, a healthy weight will decrease fertility complications. Doctors usually recommend only gaining 15 pounds during pregnancy if you are overweight, which leaves little room for a poor diet while pregnant. Start with a good purification and nutritional program. You can choose from a variety of programs available through nutrition stores or from your doctor. They can range in length from 7 to 28 days and can vary in cost as well. Choose a program that encourages eating often with no starvation, uses a variety of natural and healthy foods, and does not include pre-boxed food that is shipped to your home.

Over time I have found the best purification programs come from Standard Process, Ortho Molecular, and Biotics. A great weight release program is the Medifast program. The biggest point here is to avoid using fad programs that involve minimizing good fats, protein, or whole foods. Starvation and fasting diets should also be avoided. You can also do an at-home program by just changing your diet. Take a minimum of seven days to eat only raw vegetables and fruits. Drink only water and eliminate sugar, dairy, wheat, and foods that are processed. Visit [www.HealingHandsHealingLives.com](http://www.HealingHandsHealingLives.com) for a free audio by Dr. DiBarto on how to create a home purification program. Both partners should use a purification program or at minimum a healthy diet in the three to six months prior to attempting pregnancy.

*Step 4:  
Fertility after Birth Control*

Most pharmaceutical birth control pamphlets will state that the drug does not affect future fertility and women will be able to conceive within the next few months after stopping their birth control. Some women have found that their hormones have a more difficult time normalizing after stopping their medication, and therefore difficulty achieving pregnancy.

Start with a purification program to help the liver and fat cleanse out stored hormones from the medication. Next increase your daily intake of fiber through food or supplements. Fiber will attach to excess hormones and toxins to move them out of your body, which is why fiber is important in a purification program. Other supplements for liver and ovary support are important as well as anti-oxidants and detox supplements.

*Step 5:  
Exercise*

In 2010 I completed my first half-marathon. That is 13.1 miles and I did it in hilly San Francisco! Yes, I was sore afterwards but nowhere near the pain and soreness after having my daughter. I can't help but think if I had exercised more intensely before and during pregnancy, would that have prepared me better? Probably. On the other hand, I do not recommend starting a new exercise program like running if you weren't active in that sport prior to pregnancy! Before becoming pregnant find an exercise routine that works for you that you can continue while pregnant.

The best exercise for your body prior to pregnancy is walking or jogging and light weight lifting. Avoid high impact exercises such as kick boxing, to avoid injury to your uterus and even protecting the baby if you are unaware of your pregnancy. Gentle exercises such as yoga, tai chi, and swimming, are great to prepare your body for pregnancy and birth. Include a variety of exercises that involve stretching, strength training, and cardiovascular exercise. The better you treat your body now, prior to pregnancy, the better your body will flow with the changes and less you will have to work during birth.



### Chiropractor Referrals

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2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
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### Acupuncturist Referrals

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5. \_\_\_\_\_

# PROGRAMMING YOUR MIND

Changing our beliefs about pregnancy and birth can be a challenge. We have been programmed since high school to fear pregnancy and birth. We have watched television, read books, and visited with doctors who reinforce the idea that birth is scary, unnatural, and a medical symptom that needs to be controlled by monitoring, drugs, and surgery. In order to achieve a 'natural' birth we need to step back and observe our thoughts and feelings about birth.

Programming is all about working with our subconscious mind to affect our conscious mind. Our subconscious mind is the part of our brain that takes in information, without judgment of these thoughts, and creates a program for your conscious mind to run on a daily basis. If you live in fear all day long, the subconscious will continually use that program. When we start to use our conscious mind to reprogram our subconscious we can make a major shift in old habits. This is where affirmations, hypnosis, and even counseling can come in to help us change!

## *What Is A Normal Birth?*

Current American culture has a definite negative portrayal of birth. Birth is shown as a medical event, surrounded in fear, uncertainty and pain. The common scenario in comedy, medical and family shows always show women in a submissive position during birth. They are usually screaming in an emergency situation. Women are drugged, rushed into surgery, and are unable to deal with labor. Worse, we use sex education in schools to scare our children from engaging in sex. I remember being shown videos in school depicting birth in a terrifying way!

Seeing these shows on a weekly basis can corrupt how we view what birth actually is. What is a normal birth? What is a natural birth?

Natural birth is usually defined as laboring without medication and having a vaginal birth. Natural birth is not 'better' than 'unnatural' births and while it is a good goal to have, it does not make one birth better than others. All births are good and in divine order no matter the process. Take comfort in the thought that in the end a healthy baby and mom is all that is important.

Many women in countries outside of the United States are known for giving birth outdoors while working in fields, giving the infant to the grandparents to watch, and going back to work. They do not believe that birth is painful, should we?

## Journal Entry

What do I believe is a normal or natural birth? Where did I receive my beliefs about pregnancy or birth from? Am I pleased with my current thoughts about pregnancy or am I wanting to change these thoughts to become more loving, hopeful, and powerful?

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## Mantra

*Birth is Natural, Good, and in Divine Order.*

*My body is designed to birth normally and naturally.*

My Personal Mantra:

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Use these mantra's and create your own to use on a daily basis, especially when fear or doubt come to mind. Repeating positive affirmations to yourself will help you become comfortable with your choices and how you view birth.

## Focusing On The Positive

From now on you must change the way you talk, learn, and listen about your pregnancy and birth!

Turn off the television, movies, and news! Put down the books that ramble on about pain and difficulty authors assume is natural and necessary for birth. Even more important is that you stop reading websites, blogs, and forums of women complaining and fearing all over each other. I don't even recommend watching birth videos. Many of these videos can be scary, intimidating, and medically involved. I also really don't recommend reading any of the 'classic' pregnancy books such as "What To Expect When You're Expecting" due to the ignorance of happy pregnancy and the focus on all the symptoms and issues that can cause disruption. If you can't seem to find a happy birth book, check out the resource guide for a number of books that speak of joyful pregnancy and birth.

When we start talking to women who have had difficult experiences and want to share the details with you, it is important to stop them or kindly ask them to not share their story if possible. It is also important to stop discussions on illness, disease, or disorders that can occur to children. You do not have to be subjected to fear and anger based stories, especially when it is easy to become emotionally connected and entangled in these women's stories. You can tell them politely and gently "Thank you for wanting to share your story, but I am really focusing on having a positive, healthy birth and would appreciate not having to discuss anything that doesn't promote that!" Be brave and be bold and know that you are creating the birth experience you want.

The universal law of attraction states "like attracts like", meaning that which we think about comes to us in physical form. From movies like "The Secret" or authors such as Esther Hicks, the law of attraction can manifest in material, spiritual, and physical ways. This law can be used for our support in programming our minds for birth. You want to focus on positive, empowering statements and eliminate all negative wording or phrasing. While statements

like “birth without fear” can be powerful, the focus is still on fear, which will bring about fear. The law of attraction focuses on the subject of the sentence, not the modifiers. Use statements that use a more powerful positive focus such as “birth with joy” or “birth is easy”. Even change emotional words such as nervous to excited! This is also an important way to work with your birth plan. Focus on the positive statements of what you want to achieve, and leave out the negative to leave room for allowing more positive events to occur.

## Journal Entry

What negative situations do I need to eliminate so that I can focus on the positive? (television, movies, etc.) If dealing with negative people, how can you focus on the positive or change the conversation?

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## Mantra

*Birth is Beautiful, Easy, and Joyful.*

My mantra:

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## Redefining The Process

When reading books, we are exposed to medical words that have negative connotations that we often miss because they are ingrained so deeply in our vocabulary. Even words without the negative history or implications have become negative because of our association with a negative event. Change these words to positive and loving terms to further embrace the journey you are embarking on.

### Basic terminology:

Delivery = born

Contractions = rushes, waves

Labor = birthing time,

Pain = pressure, discomfort

Dilation = opening

False Labor = pre-birth waves, pre-birth rushes

This also includes wording and phrasing during birthing time. Rearrange your wording to focus on the positive and eliminate the negative. Change “Don’t hold your breath” to “Breathe slowly and gently” or “Stop contracting the muscles of your arms” to “Relax your arm muscles”.

## Journal Entry

What words or stories have I told myself about birth and pregnancy that I need to change?

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What will I change them to?

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Mantra

*I am relaxed, open, and healthy.*

*I trust my body to create a healthy pregnancy and birth.*

My mantra:

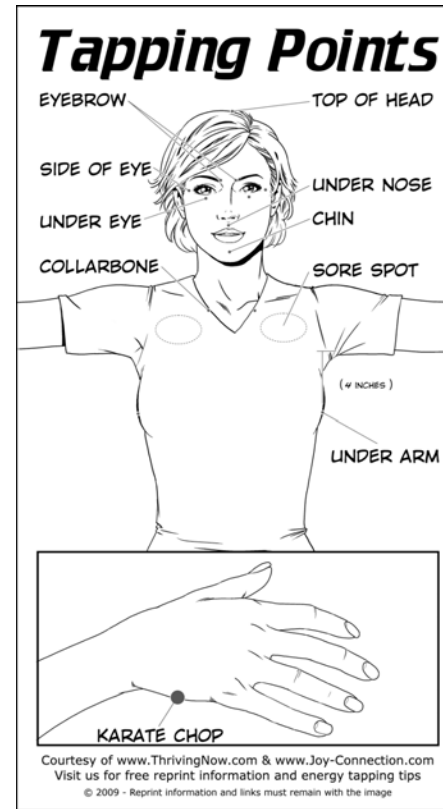
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## Looking for more ways to use affirmations?

Many people use a technique called “tapping” or Emotional Freedom Technique to assist with using affirmations. Tapping employs stimulating acupuncture points on the face and body with your hands to open up and increase the energy of the acupuncture system. The technique is used for a multitude of issues from weight release, phobias, emotional trauma, and much more. Using this technique associated with positive birthing affirmations can strengthen your belief and vibration that these affirmations are true and reprogramming your subconscious. When combined with affirmations, tapping will remove the blocks in the acupuncture system and increase healing and the rate of programming your mind.

The chart to the right shows the points to tap while stating affirmations. Start with the karate chop point and state, “Even though I am fearful of giving birth (choose your own statement



here), I completely love and accept myself”. Then, starting at the top of your head tap on each point at least seven to ten times while repeating mantra’s or affirmations.

Something to keep a watch out for when using affirmations or mantras is the idea of negative rebound from our brain. For example, if you say “I am relaxed, open, and healthy” and your brain responds “No I’m not!” or “I’ll never be able to do this” you are negating what the affirmation says.

Using tapping can help eliminate this problem by first starting with the negative statement or belief and going through the tapping procedure, “I am afraid”. Then alternate the negative statement with a positive statement, like an argument. “I am afraid, No I’m not, I can’t do this, yes I can”. Then end the final tapping cycle with all positive statements, “I can do this, I am excited”. Change the phrases to what works best for you. See the resource guide for sources on tapping. Don’t be afraid to use whatever phrases work for you or pinpoint how you are feeling at the moment you are working. If you are really stuck with an emotion or issue, argue with yourself while tapping and see what words flow forth. Try to veer yourself downstream emotionally towards joy. The Hypnobabies website ([www.hypnobabies.com](http://www.hypnobabies.com)) and program contains joyful pregnancy affirmations, which can be purchased as MP3 files or as a CD.





## *Where And When Do You Want To Give Birth?*

Our choices for places to birth range widely and we cannot be anything but grateful for these options. Hospitals are now offering private birthing rooms complete with king size beds, private bathrooms, water birth tubs and much more. Birthing centers are also springing up all over the nation focusing on creating a more 'home like' atmosphere. We have always had the option of birthing at home with a doctor, midwife, and even without medical help.

When deciding to birth in a hospital make sure to be prepared with questions for the doctor and staff after you decide the type of birth you want. Most hospitals will not allow an actual birth in a water tub, but will let you stay in while you are experiencing rushes. The practice of moving the mother to the 'delivery' room for pushing is dying out but still present.

Many birthing centers are becoming available. Some are attached to hospitals and some are not. The birthing center is created to have the atmosphere of birthing at home with comfortable and attractive suites, but with access to medical care if needed. Many midwives practice at these centers and can offer complete care throughout pregnancy. Usually there is no preparation with enema's, IV, or electronic fetal monitoring and the focus is on natural birth.

When deciding to birth at home you must absolutely find the right midwife or doctor for you. Most will insist on low-risk qualifications such as being under thirty-five years of age, no gestational diabetes or history of diabetes, and other risk factors. I chose a home birth for many reasons. I started out expecting to need to be in a hospital which made me very unhappy but I didn't know I had a choice. When I researched my options and found out that many women do birth successfully at home, and most importantly I found a doctor I trusted, I knew I wanted to be at home. I felt comfortable, knew I had control over my settings and

who would be attending. My plan was also to have a water birth in a pool I had purchased, but we weren't able to inflate it in time. This was an important lesson in planning but also flexibility.

### **Due Date:**

I added in the question of when you would like to deliver to take the time to talk about the estimated due date (EDD). Currently, EDD is based upon a 28 day cycle with ovulation occurring at day 14. Gestation is thought to last 40 weeks or nine months after the date of conception. This information was based upon the research of Harmanni Boerhaave, a botanist who lived in 1744, and based his 40 week gestation period by the dates which the Bible stated Jesus was born. In 1812, a German obstetrician Franz Naegele popularized this technique and it became mainstream in medicine. "Naegle's Rule" to determine the approximate due date is calculated by taking the first day of your last period, and counting back three months, then adding seven days. If you have been charting you will know what your day of ovulation (and probably conception date) is and will be able to better know when your approximate due date is. I still cringe whenever I see that wheel pulled out like a birth is nothing but a number to fit into a sliding scale. The bible interpretation of gestation was 10 lunar months. A lunar month is actually 29.53 days, which puts the entire pregnancy at a full 15 days longer than 40 weeks. Researchers have found that for first time mothers, their pregnancy was an average of 41 weeks and 1 day. For mothers who have more than one child, their average length was 40 weeks and 3 days. The International Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology have many articles on this information.

With all the confusing information on determining a due date, it can be hard to know what is best. Here is a simplified version. If you have been charting and you know the day of your temperature shift, add nine months to the day of your thermals shift and then subtract seven days from that date.

Some women joke about their due date and extend it to the general month they expect the baby, I have even heard these women talk about the quarter they are due! Do not be confined to one date. As I have shown you, your pregnancy does not follow a mathematical formula. If you are uncomfortable at the end of your pregnancy it is understandable, but inducing or a cesarean will most likely hinder the process than get it started. Your body knows when the baby is ready and only your body! Some women who are induced do not have their milk express for weeks later. Others were unable to experience natural birth because the heightened effects of pitocin forced them to require an epidural. Again knowing your date of ovulation and conception will eliminate the possibility of a miscalculation in the 'due' date. The ACOG (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists) also recommends that doctors do not interfere with a normal pregnancy and birth prior to 42 weeks.

Be aware of your choices, discuss your charting with your doctor or midwife and always stay on the side of healthy baby and mom.

## *Who Do I Want To Attend My Birth?*

Are you currently working with a doctor that you enjoy or are you looking for someone new? Make sure to interview EVERYONE in the practice because you never know who will be on call the day you deliver. Schedule as best you can each appointment with a different member. Choosing a midwife can be as difficult as choosing a doctor. Not all midwives are open to natural birth and would prefer to work in a center or hospital equipped with drugs. Just make sure to know the type of birth you want, and what questions you want to ask your provider!

A doula is a woman who is trained in supporting a woman who is birthing but does not provide medical care. She does not replace a doctor or midwife but can be present in any situation. Some hospitals even provide doulas free of charge when asked. The doula can be present for emotional and physical support, is there to answer questions, and to help the mother stay informed. The doula should not be used as protection or a buffer against a hospital, doctor, or nurse to make sure you can birth the way you want. If you feel you need support like this do not hesitate to change doctors ASAP!

There is always the option of an unattended birth, meaning no medical support and birthing at home. Discuss your feelings about this with your partner before surprising them with the responsibility of being the "doctor" at the birth. This is a serious consideration and I ask that you truly research and educate yourself about this option. While birth is natural, normal, and a beautiful process you do not want to create a situation that can spiral out of control without the proper knowledge of birth, post-partum care, and care of the newborn.

What about family members? Have you considered who you will tell when you go into labor? Do you want the whole family there, or just your partner? Do you have a friend you would want present or a group of friends? When I asked Dr. Duhart who could be there, he told me he has seen women birth alone and women who had the entire block there!

**Midwife/Medical Doctor/Doctor of Osteopathy Referrals**

Referral	Specialty	Referred by	Hospital/Home/Center

**Doula Referrals**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions to ask your doctor, midwife, and doula**

- 1.) “What is your opinion of natural birth and birth plans?”  
This question usually presents the most information about their philosophy.
- 2.) “I am curious as to what your transfer rate is” (for a midwife) or “what your c-section rate is” (for an OB).
- 3.) “In what situations do you feel an induction would be necessary?” Is the answer related to distress for the baby or timing for vacation?
- 4.) “Is there anything that you are not comfortable working with?” Such as vaginal breech births or working with other medical professionals.
- 5.) “Are you comfortable in supporting me in how I choose to birth?”
- 6.) If you are looking for a VBAC (vaginal birth after cesarean), ask if they have ever delivered during this type of birth, or if they are comfortable performing one.
- 7.) “Are you comfortable working with a doula/midwife?”
- 8.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?
- 9.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?
- 10.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_?

## *How Do I Want To Give Birth?*

We have many options for our bodies while birthing. Many of us already know that laying on your back with your feet in stirrups works against gravity, causes more damage to both mom and baby, and that most doctors do not even require this position anymore.

If you have the opportunity to try, water birthing is a great tool! Warm water will relax your muscles and your mind and help the birthing process. It is also great for baby to transition into the world through an environment similar to the womb. No, the baby will not drown! Realize that the baby does not breathe air while inside the womb nor during birth. Since the umbilical cord is still transferring oxygen and nutrients as long as it is still attached, the baby will be just fine when born into water.

If you can walk during birthing it can help as well. During rushes have a partner hold you up so you can relax your muscles. Try sitting on an exercise ball, a birthing stool, or even a rocking chair. The options are limitless depending on where you birth or what options you have at home.

## *Your Birth Plan*

Many women go through a painstaking process to create a birth plan, and when they arrive at the hospital it is disregarded or ignored. I think the birth plan is a great tool to discuss with your doctor and midwife, but if you have chosen the right doctor or midwife for you then you will not have to fight for your values or rights as a birthing woman. If your medical staff does not support you then change doctors, now!

On the other hand, when you have a supportive team it is still good to create a plan and discuss it with all who will be attending your birth. Use the plan as a flexible tool guide, but most importantly use it as a visualization tool. Take out anything negative such as “I don’t want xyz” or “do not give me xyz” and do your best to create a positive, attracting plan using phrases like “I want a natural birth”.

Online and interactive birth plans are available. Take time to create your plan and look at a few websites to find examples of what your options are. Then take time every day to meditate or daydream about your perfect birth. See yourself experiencing rushes, who is with you, and actually meeting your baby.

## *What Types Of Classes Should You Take?*

When it comes to educating yourself on pregnancy and childbirth we have many options. It can be intimidating navigating the Internet or a bookstore trying to find books that will support you and your partner, while not promoting fear or hate. Reading “What To Expect When You’re Expecting” is a choice, but one that promotes a medical view of pregnancy and birth and portrays the more uncommon complications and symptoms that may arise. Do not use this as your sole pregnancy book or birthing book, it will teach you only what you need to be afraid of. Choose a class that supports what YOU want from your birth and what will work with your situation! But always take the good from each class or book you use and throw the rest out.

Many hospitals offer classes for couples who will be birthing at their facility. These classes cover the basics, including hospital routine, medications available, and the medical process of birth. If you are planning a hospital birth, intending on medical intervention (or maybe not), and are interested in learning about the hospital you will be at, please take these classes! Many women have told me they are elementary (husbands asking “what is a contraction?”) and based on how to make the woman a good patient by understanding epidurals, inductions and cesarean section. Be aware that if you are programming to believe and trust in a natural birth then these classes might not be for you! If you are going for a natural birth in a hospital I truly recommend taking the hospital courses along with many other classes to get a full idea of what will be expected in the hospital. I do recommend taking newborn classes through your local hospital including CPR, massage, and infant care.

Hypnosis is a powerful tool to use during childbirth. Through the use of hypnosis classes, books, and professionals, you can learn how to create a painless birth. The two most popular classes are “Hypnobabies”, and “Hypnobirthing The Mongan method”. Hypnobabies offers an at home class or group classes depending on the area. This course contains a workbook with audio CDs that

are mailed to your home. Their slogan is “No Drugs For Babies, No Pain For Mommy” and they support using only hypnosis. The author feels that other classes promote ‘pain management’ techniques, where this program supports that birth can be a pain free process and to focus on making that happen. There are many types of hypnosis for birth classes and educators. These classes can be taught by a professional, in a class setting, through audio online or through books. It can be easily combined with other classes. These courses also promote using your partner or coach as support. They provide ‘scripts’ for your partners to read to help you relax and tune into your body.

The Bradley method is taught nationwide by certified instructors and many books are offered on the technique. Visit [www.BradleyBirth.com](http://www.BradleyBirth.com) to find an instructor near you or purchase a book on the course. The Bradley method prepares women for natural childbirth with coaching from the husband. They focus on natural breathing, relaxation, nutrition, exercise, and education. There are traditionally 12 classes over 12 weeks taught by a certified instructor. These classes focus on ‘how to deal with the pain of labor’ versus teaching painless childbirth.

“Birthing from within” is a good choice for any type of birthing that focuses more on the spiritual and emotional preparation. They promote mindful and compassionate birthing no matter your choice of venue or pain management. There are online classes, phone classes, or personal classes depending on your location. There is a book available and is a must read!

Birthworks is a ‘process’ that encourages the woman to be in tune with her body and understand her needs. “It recognizes that there is no one right way to labor and birth. BirthWorks does not teach breathing patterns, but instead encourages slow deep breathing as one of many ways to promote relaxation and facilitate labor.” They discuss building positive beliefs about pregnancy and birth and how to create a safe and happy birth. Learn more about their classes at [www.birthworks.com](http://www.birthworks.com).

The International Childbirth Education Association hosts classes all over the nation. They focus on general knowledge about birth and pregnancy, including natural birth. They believe in teaching all options and preparing for each situation that may arise during birth and pregnancy. Each instructor will have a different philosophy and teaching agenda so make sure to interview all of the available teachers in the area. You can obtain a list at [www.ICEA.org](http://www.ICEA.org).

Online classes can be found through a number of websites, many listed in the references section. Classes normally cost between \$100-\$300. These classes can be done through webinars or through mailings. Each technique has a different option so check with the class you want to take such as Hypnobabies, and see how they offer their classes.

Personally, I never attended a class but purchased the Hypnobabies at home course. I did read all the books listed in the resources and felt they all contributed valuable information. I recommend researching all of the classes and options and trying a little of each, or even taking them all. Choose what works best with your beliefs, needs, and individual situations.

## Journal Entry:

Research your local classes and use this chart to compare each one.

Class Name	Online/ Location	Cost	Duration of Course	Class Times
Ex) Hospital	Hospital	\$150	4 Months	Wed. 6-8pm

## *How Long Will It Take?*

Nothing gets me more excited than smashing the fallacy of ‘normal labor time for first time mothers’! One doctor told me I would never make it through the typical 19 hours first time mom’s experience. He was right; I was in labor for five hours and thirty-nine minutes. Women are terrified that birth will last days, especially when one of the first questions we ask each other is how long labor lasted! We are also told that transition (from opening 8-10cm and into pushing) is the most painful and lasts the longest. Of the few hours I was birthing, the first three were utterly painless. The next two were intense but nothing more and the last few minutes were tense while my daughter was breech. Let the women who want to share their horror stories talk to someone else and focus on the stories that are similar to the ones you want!

I also know many women who were too tense to ‘progress’ and their fear prevented them from adventuring further into birth. After receiving an epidural or some kind of medication they gave birth within the next hour. I share this so you do not feel pressured to birth for an extended amount of time with no medication but to understand your mind and your body and give yourself the best birth you can!

## *Choosing Nutrition*

Nutrition takes on a whole new role while pregnant. You are eating for two people both in quantity and in quality! You should know by now that eating healthy and whole foods are best for you and your baby and to stay away from processed, devitalized food as much as possible. I won’t lecture much here, but would like to point out some helpful hints while pregnant.

You should be taking a prenatal vitamin, or a supplement regimen focused on prenatal care. There are daily recommended dosages for all of these vitamins but that may not always be the best route to go. When taking a supplement the most important factor is the source of the nutrition. Read the ingredient label first. If there is nothing mentioned there besides fillers throw it out! Instead look for supplements which list ingredients are as carrots or alfalfa. Chemical sources of nutrition are not easily digested or absorbed by the body and they are basically a waste of energy. These labels will have no food present but a large number of chemical names.

The FDA has not approved any supplements for use or cures, but we do know that food based nutrition can help the body heal and grow. Buy your supplements from a well respected store or doctor. I find it atrocious that women are given medications with proven deleterious side effects on the baby and mother, but are warned to not take nutritional supplements because they are not FDA approved. While many medications have fatal or disfiguring effects that are not known until after the baby is born, nutrition and food based supplements have never been proven to harm a child outside of an overdose. However, some herbs, homeopathies, and foods can be dangerous to the baby and need to be avoided, specifically those with caffeine, alcohol, additives, etc. For example, some herbs have the possibility of inducing labor! Know the contents of what you are taking and discuss them with your midwife or doctor.

The vinegar test is a great way to see if your supplements are digestible. This process will help you avoid acid reflux and vomiting.

While many argue that vinegar (or water) does not match the acidity of the stomach and is not a good test, I believe it is still worth a try. Take a glass of vinegar and put your supplements in the glass. The pill should be dissolved within twenty minutes or less. If it does not dissolve then your body will not be able to digest it. Throw them out (or plant the pills in your garden) and look for those made of food in soft gel or tablets.

Another note of precaution is to not do enemas while pregnant. Coffee enemas will have an adverse affect on the baby due to the high content of caffeine and chemicals if using non-organic coffee. You can use these for a fertility program but definitely not while pregnant or nursing. The caffeine will be directly put into your blood and therefore to the baby.

### **Avoid these herbs:**

- Angelica – stimulates menstruation
- Black Cohosh – stimulates uterine contraction
- Blue Cohosh – stimulates uterine contraction
- Borage oil – stimulates uterine contraction
- Comfrey – possible liver damage for both baby and mom
- Dong Quai – stimulates uterine contraction
- Elder – do not use during pregnancy or lactation
- Fenugreek – uterine relaxant
- Goldenseal – too powerful an antibiotic
- Henbane – high toxicity
- Horsetail – too high in silica
- Licorice Root – retains water and increases blood pressure
- Motherwort – stimulates uterine contraction
- Mugwort – stimulates uterine contraction
- Nutmeg – can induce miscarriage
- Pennyroyal Leaf – stimulates uterine contractions (NOTE: Pennyroyal essential oil should not be used by pregnant women at any time!) – do not handle if pregnant or nursing
- Rue – stimulates uterine contraction
- Shepherd's Purse – used only for hemorrhaging during/ after childbirth
- Uva Ursi – too powerful during pregnancy
- Yarrow – stimulates uterine contraction



# PREPARE

Now that we you changed your thinking about what birth means to you in our program, and decided what type of birth you want to have, it is time to prepare for each trimester of your pregnancy! While I share more about natural birth, natural also covers how we take care of our body and baby while you are pregnant. Now it is time to act on preparing your body as well as your mind.

## **Purpose of Preparation**

In my practice I have treated many pregnant women and each has a different view on what type of birth they would like. I am excited for each woman no matter her choice of where and how to give birth. I do try to discuss with each woman her options and her reasoning of her choices. Many women begin by wanting a natural birth, but are unwilling to put in the time or effort needed to prepare. I find that women who do not prepare mentally or physically for a natural birth are the ones who are unable to get what they want in the end. When women do not understand how to view their rushes and manage the experience they are relying on those around them to create their birth for them. We are more easily manipulated into fear when we are uneducated, especially about something as misunderstood as natural birth or home birth. Natural birth is more than the stages of ‘labor’, the orchestrated ‘timing of contractions’ and the length of birth, or just pictures in a book. When you choose a hospital birth you need to be prepared for the personnel to ask you and at times force upon you medications, monitors, IV’s, and much more. Being educated about your rights, wants, and needs will prepare you to be able to handle any situation that arises.

Education can come in many forms such as books, online courses, workbooks, meditation or hypnosis audio, and even meeting with other women who have had the same experience you are looking to create.

## *Trimester 1*

### **How To Eliminate Morning Sickness:**

Ideally you will not need to deal with morning sickness because you were able to change and clean your diet before becoming pregnant. Morning sickness is generally thought to have a number of sources. But the predominant cause is that our body is trying to decrease its toxicity by flooding our kidneys and intestines with excess chemicals to be eliminated. Morning sickness peaks in the first trimester when the baby is most sensitive to chemical toxins that change DNA and cell division and needs to be protected.

Keeping crackers and water by the bed while sleeping can help calm the stomach at night. Make a ‘green’ smoothie or drink every day with mixed vegetables. This will help bring down the acidity in your body, decrease toxins, act as an anti-oxidant, and improve overall health. Use a company such as Standard Process whose protein powder is created by food and greens. You can juice vegetables as well to create your own drink.

The stomach reflex is located on the left hand, in the thumb web area. Rub or squeeze the area between your thumb and index finger to give your stomach some relief. You can also use acupuncture to help balance the energy of the body. Many women have had success using this technique.

Minimize taking over the counter stomach relief. Our stomach does need very low acidity to digest our food so nutrition can be absorbed. When we take acid blockers we inhibit our body’s ability to break down and use food. Use hydrochloric acid instead, which is only sold through healthcare practitioners. It will help your body break down food more quickly and get nutrition into your cells. Discuss with your provider if this is the appropriate supplement for you.

Toxins and excess hormones attach to fiber in the digestive system and fiber pulls it out of the blood and helps eliminate them through the stool. Increase your fiber intake to help decrease the effects of cleansing while pregnant. While fiber will not help with constipation, try increasing magnesium for constipation.

## **How To Exercise In Trimester 1:**

Walking is the best exercise for you at this time and will be throughout pregnancy.

Yoga is also a great way to stretch and relax your muscles. Look for local prenatal classes in your area. Bikram yoga or 'hot' yoga is popular and safe during pregnancy. The yoga only raises your temperature by one degree and is safe for the baby. It is best to continue whatever program you were using before conception. If you were attending yoga or dance classes prior to becoming pregnant, you will most likely be able to continue these activities while pregnant. As long as you are comfortable while exercising and not straining your body, you can likely continue the same program.

Kegal exercises are the best way to strengthen your vaginal walls in preparation for birth and post-partum. Start by practicing when you are urinating. Try to stop your flow of urine by squeezing or pulling up. Be aware that sucking in your stomach or using other thigh muscles is not the correct way to do kegal exercises. Try holding and releasing ten times a day and work your way up to holding for ten seconds and releasing. Lastly work towards being able to hold the muscles tight for a few minutes. There are small vaginal balls you can purchase at adult stores to help work the muscles as well. They are known as Ben Wa balls and can be found at online stores as well. This will help you recover after birth and decrease healing time as well.

## **Nutritional Care**

### **Decreasing Your Risk Of Miscarriage**

Nutrition is a key factor in reducing the risk of miscarriage. The danger is greatest in the first trimester, which is why it is vitally important to take extra care of yourself in this phase. Take supplements that increase the amount of oxygen in your blood, such as those that contain octacosanol. Visit your chiropractor to enhance the signals of your brain to the uterus and also to balance the pelvis. Again, if the pelvis is distorted and twists the ligaments that connect to the uterus, there will be increased stress on the baby.

Nutritional care will also protect your perineum (vaginal muscles) from tearing or needing an episiotomy. Some women who are vegetarians tear more easily because of lack of healing proteins and fats. Preparation, a good diet, perineum stretching and support during birth, can all prevent or manage tears.

To start off, choose healthy fats such as saturated and monounsaturated fats. These types of fats come from good oils such as olive and coconut, avocados, raw nuts and seeds, and even organic, grass fed beef. Choose a good source of fish oil, which is high in omega-3's. Your fish oil should be refrigerated. Open the capsule to smell the oil, if it smells rancid or fishy throw it out. Other sources of omega-3's are flaxseeds and salmon. Salmon should be caught wild and never farmed. Bad fats are the fats such as trans fats, hydrogenated fats, and types of vegetable oils. These types of fats will actually break down your skin and reduce your overall health.

Vitamin C found in natural foods such as oranges and green and yellow vegetables, will help increase the elasticity and healing of the skin and specifically the collagen of the skin. Not only does it also boost your immune system, eating whole food sources of this vitamin is good for your overall health.

Amino acids, Vitamin E, and proteins are usually lacking in vegetarian diets. Eggs, fish, seeds, meats and organic grains are good sources of these amino acids.

My general view on nutrition in pregnancy is to eat whole, raw, organic foods as often as possible. Keeping this simple is easy through diet and also supplements. Check out a liquid nutritional drink to cover all your bases. Many of my patients find that supplementing with a whole food nutritional supplement eliminates morning sickness, muscle pains, and general health discomfort.

## *Trimester 2*

### **How To Heal Your Changing Body:**

Pregnancy hormones increase the laxity of your ligaments to make room for baby during pregnancy and especially in the pelvis during birth. The hormones are not specific to just the pelvis and work on the whole body including the wrists, spine, knees, even ankles. Keeping your ligaments in shape through nutrition, exercise, massage, and chiropractic is the best solution for decreasing physical discomfort.

Start with a great massage therapist who specializes in prenatal massage. There are special acupuncture points and pressure points that need to be avoided with massage due to potentially inducing labor in second and third trimester. Look for a therapist who uses cranio-sacral therapy, ask if they have pillows that support the belly (yes you can lay on your stomach again!), and if not remember to lie on your left side.

Chiropractic has been proven to help with decreasing time of birthing, the discomfort of pregnancy, help turn breech babies, and much more. Starting at 20 weeks, I became a subject in a preliminary study of chiropractic effects on pregnancy and birth. I was adjusted one time a week with a special technique called Logan Basic and the Webster technique. These adjustments helped to relax my muscles, realign my pelvis as the baby grew and moved, and helped the ligaments that held my uterus to my pelvis remain flexible. After a few years of the research study, we have found that chiropractic adjustments help to reduce labor time and the need for interventions and also increases the satisfaction of the pregnancy and birth for the mother.

## **Being Comfortable sleeping**

While sleeping, utilize a body pillow. You can rest your belly on the pillow and use it between your knees to support your pelvis. There are full body pillows that are curved to support your neck, belly, and knees while sleeping. Sleeping can become difficult as the months go on so try to rest your body as much as possible. Use a warm bath with Epsom salts to relax your muscles before bed.

## **Information For Your Birth Partner**

Include your birth partner in all of your preparation! It doesn't matter if your partner is a spouse, family member, or good friend you know will be there at your birth. Find someone who will support you in your creation of a positive joyful birth.

Many classes such as Bradley and other hypnosis courses provide scripts for your partner to read to you to help you relax while you are in a meditative or hypnotic state. This is a great way for your partner to learn how to address you while you are birthing. Learning key words such as relax, open, breathe, and calm are great words that don't require much thinking.

Create a plan with your partner on how often you want to practice, where, and when. Be clear with your partner about how you expect them to care for you over the next few months and what their role will be during birth.

What an exciting time! Your baby is growing and you are prepared on many levels for your birth and to meet your new baby. There are some important techniques to start utilizing these next few months that will help your body stretch and heal.

Most importantly is the perineum(vaginal) stretching. This technique helps to relax your vaginal muscles and helps you become aware of the muscles you will be using during birth.

The technique is simple and only takes a few minutes every day starting during week 34-36 until the baby is born. Using clean fingers dab olive oil on your outer vagina. Insert one or two fingers into the vagina and stretch gently. You can use fingers from the same hand and spread the fingers apart or even use both hands. Another way is to have your partner help you. This is especially helpful when you cannot reach adequately, but also to reach the deeper vaginal muscles. Have your partner use a clean hand with lubricant. They will insert one or two fingers in your vagina and slowly spread their fingers apart. Have them use moderate pressure to massage your vagina and find some sore spots that feel like knots or trigger points in the muscle. Using gentle but firm pressure have them push on the spot until it releases. This will help your vaginal muscles relax even more. This technique will be helpful during the birthing process as well.

## **How To Eliminate Acid Reflux**

Now that the baby is big enough to push up against your stomach, acid reflux can enter the game. If you are unlucky enough to experience this, there are only a few safe things to try. Whatever you do, avoid toxic acid suppressants that carry heavy metals dangerous to your baby.

After meals use a supplement that contains hydrochloric acid (HCL) sold only through health care practitioners. This will help

increase your stomach's ability to digest food. We used this in the first trimester but for different reasons. Make sure to also eat smaller meals throughout the day. As the baby pushes up into your abdomen, the stomach will have a smaller area to work with. Eating smaller meals will decrease the amount of food in the stomach and reduce the chances of reflux.

## Items To Pack/Have At Home For Birthing Time

Personally, I was not prepared for Ava to be born. I had no supplies in my room, the pool was still in its package, and the baby supplies were carefully put away in her new room. The pool was being inflated while I was in labor, but it took so long to complete, I didn't get to use it. I never thought to have quick food ready or water by my bed. I really didn't even think to have a pile of baby towels, blankets, diapers, hats, or socks ready either. My midwife had to find everything guided by my directions. If you know which room you are planning on using, stock up that room! Have everything ready in a place you can easily find it, see it, and remember to use!

### Items To Pack Checklist

- ✓ Everything your doctor or midwife asks you to have
- ✓ A birthing tub or swimming pool, optional heating, thermometer, filters etc.
- ✓ Exercise ball sized based on your height. Knees should be at ninety degrees.
- ✓ A small pillow or sock filled with corn or rice to be microwaved. Place this on the vaginal area to help warm the muscles for stretching during birth.
- ✓ TENS unit: an hand held electrical unit with four sticky pads that are placed on the low back that blocks the signal of pain from the body to the spinal cord.
  - Use during birthing, you can increase the intensity of the machine during contractions to help with back discomfort, but beware as soon as the wave is over the unit will be too high. So be careful!!

- Many doctors are okay with having this in a center or hospital.
- ✓ Portable music player with audio preprogrammed in (hypnosis).
- ✓ Have everything ready for baby such as blankets, hats, diapers, etc. in the room you will be in!
- ✓ Grocery shop for easy foods to eat such as fruits and veggies, deli meat, and bottled water so you can keep it handy in the room during and after birth.
- ✓ Lots of pillows for support
- ✓ Camera and/or video recorder
- ✓ Clary Sage for aromatherapy with aloe gel.
- ✓ A boppy pillow to sit on after birth
- ✓ Massage lotion
- ✓ Lots of light. While you may birth with the lights dim or out, make sure to have extra lights prepared for after. The midwife or doctor may need to suture and care for you, don't scramble last minute!
- ✓ A post-partum peri bottle to rinse your genitals after using the bathroom.
- ✓ \_\_\_\_\_
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I was pleasantly surprised to find that most of these items are available at some hospitals. It will save you packing and stress if you remember to ask when you get there! The ultimate purpose is to not scramble while you are lying in bed (if you birth at home)

with your newborn giving your midwife directions where things are hidden in your house!

What your birth partner can do for you while you are birthing:

1. Repeat calm, supportive, positive phrases you have already practiced or scripted.
2. Use a tennis ball or hand massager to put pressure on your lower back (helps saves hands and fingers)
3. Rub your feet or belly

## **Breech Babies**

Babies have been born breech ever since we have been giving birth. The majority of hospitals now mandate cesarean for all breech babies and do not allow a vaginal breech birth. If you are at center there may be options but it is still a risk. At home delivering breech can be challenging but possible with the right medical attention and experienced doctor or midwife. When I began my birth my daughter was in the 'head down' position. After a few hours she had turned and her butt was facing down. My doctor was concerned and warned me I may need to be transported.

If you know that your baby is breech in the last three months there are some options to help bring the baby to an optimal position. First visit your chiropractor and get adjusted. The Webster technique is the most popular and effective way of helping the uterus relax and 'untwist'. Acupuncture and moxibustion (use of the moxa herb) have also been proven to help the baby move into position.

Check out [www.spinningbabies.com](http://www.spinningbabies.com) for classes, finding a practitioner, and more information! Birthing a breech baby vaginally and without drugs is possible, but only under the care of an experienced professional.

## **Get Your Baby Moving!**

Sometimes babies need a little extra help to get moving when it is their time. Some great exercises are walking and yoga. You can

see an acupuncturist or get a massage. If nothing is working try using an electric breast pump to stimulate your hormones.

During birth it is important to be in a comfortable position for you and for your baby. We have many options and you must choose what feels best for you! I went for a walk and experienced no pain, I sat on a birth ball in the shower, and again no pain! I laid down in bed and pain appeared! The second half of my birth I spent in bed on my side or propped up. I wonder what experience I would have had if I had gotten up, went for a walk, or even tried out different positions. When we are birthing, our focus is all on the baby and our body, so make sure your birth partner, midwife, nurse, or doula reminds you of different positions and ways to get comfortable!

Walking is a great way to ease any discomfort and can also speed up the time of birth. While you are walking and you experience a rush, lean on your partner or a wall for support. Relax all your muscles during the rush and when it subsides continue walking.

Sitting on a chair or 'birth' ball is a great way to open your pelvis. You can also sit on the chair backwards and using a pillow, lean up against the back for support. You can also sit with your legs crossed on the floor. You also have the option of kneeling. You can place your hands on the floor, or rest your head on a pillow on a chair or on the floor. These positions help the baby rotate to a favorable position to prevent breech births.

When standing, you can lean against the back of a chair, have your partner hold you up, or lean against a wall. Squatting is a great way to open up your pelvis, and also shorten the birth canal. Squat using the support of a chair, couch, or partner.

If you choose to lie down, prop yourself up with pillows so you are not flat on your back. If you lay on your back, you lose circulation to the baby, work against gravity, and will have a more difficult birth. Lay on your side supported by pillows or blankets. Side

lying will have no gravity benefits but can be helpful for back labor, slowing down labor, or just resting between rushes.

## **Back Labor Prevention**

Back labor is dreaded and a topic most women complain and worry about, but aren't prepared for. You can prevent and find ways to decrease the back labor, I promise!

First off, get adjusted regularly!! This will help prevent twisting of your pelvis and back so your muscles will be better able to handle the shifting while birthing. Remember your ligaments that attach to your uterus attach to your pelvis and low back, the more aligned and loose they are the better your birth will be.

Get a TENS unit! These are small, battery-operated units that use four pads (or just two). The unit sends an electrical signal through the pads to your back (or wherever you use them) to **BLOCK THE SIGNAL OF PAIN**. Yes, it does block pain! I used one while in labor and I'm so very grateful I had it. A warning though, the levels are dial operated and you will increase the levels as the contractions strengthen. When the contraction is over make sure to lower the levels so the unit doesn't cause more pain! You can purchase one online, through your chiropractor, or from a store. Many insurance companies cover these units so talk with your chiropractor to see if they carry them!

Have your partner use their fist, tennis ball, or massage tool to put pressure on your low back. A tennis ball or tool will save their hand so they won't tire as you continue to birth.

Use a hot pack, or a heated corn/rice sock/tube on your back.

Change positions! Again, while I was walking, standing in the tub, or sitting on an exercise ball I had no pain. I truly believe if I had continued to walk or change positions my pain would have been non-existent.

Just realize now, that you will forget all of this while birthing! Your entire focus will be on relaxing and birthing and you will most likely not remember anything you practiced. Make sure that you discuss all of this with your birth partner, midwife, doula, or whoever your support system is so they can remember these things for you!!

# POST PREGNANCY

Celebrate! You have journeyed through pregnancy and creating your birth! No matter your story, focus on the good and the beautiful, look into your new baby's eyes and be grateful you have each other.

Many women are surprised at how straining pregnancy and birth was on their body. Here are some tips for getting through the healing process quickly and gently.

## *Salts and Herbs*

Here are some items to purchase before birth and have at home waiting for you. When you are home and are able to take a bath, add some Epsom salts for a Sitz bath. This will help relax your strained muscles and ligaments. You can add aromatherapy to relax and calm as well.

Herbs are also great for postpartum issues. Using a douche of Echinacea, yarrow, and goldenseal would be helpful (daily) for a couple of weeks to heal sores and tearing. Also using a topical herbal cream that contains these herbs can help speed healing. I personally recommend using the Sun Dance ointment from Shawnee Moon ([www.shawneemoon.com](http://www.shawneemoon.com)) for vaginal tearing. For hemorrhoids use a lotion with stinging nettle and try sitting on a boppy pillow. Ask your midwife for what she would recommend. Many moms add herbs and solutions to their water after birthing in a tub to heal their tissues.

## *Breastfeeding*

Breastfeeding is a wonderful gift to give your child, yet can be painful when first starting. Don't give up, buy a large supply of lanolin, and relax as best you can while nursing. Use the La Leche League as a fantastic resource and find support!

Many moms have difficulty nursing, producing milk, and maintaining milk supply. It can be incredibly frustrating for both the parent and the child, especially when attempting to nurse exclusively. I personally lost my supply at three months. I tried everything, researched, and called everyone I knew! There are many causes and solutions, including focusing on the spinal and nutritional health of the mother and infant. Here are a few things that can help.

When we are tense from pain and discomfort we experience stress in many forms. Our muscles tighten in our chest and back, our spine stiffens, and our mind experiences stress as well. All of these issues can decrease our milk supply. We have a few options for help and the first place is always chiropractic. Many research studies have found that adjusting the spine with chiropractic can increase the milk supply for many women. Chiropractic adjustments remove the interference from the spinal nerves to the breasts so any signal to increase breast milk is increased. Also the stress on the physical body after childbirth can be intense, including remaining in the position of nursing for hours. When the muscles of the back and chest tense, I believe it can block the flow of milk from the ducts. Adjusting can relax our muscles decreasing pain and stress.

Nutritionally speaking, we need as much whole and good food as we can get! Nursing uses most of the nutrition and energy that we take in so don't be afraid to eat! Increase all of your fats, protein, vegetables, and water! Check out Yogi Tea's Nursing Mom's milk and use it on a daily basis. Helpful herbs such as fenugreek, milk thistle, red raspberry leaf, nettles, blessed thistle and alfalfa

based thistle can increase your supply as well. Try putting a whole chicken (take out the organs, but leave the skin and bones) in a crock pot with vegetables. Drink the broth to use all the fats. Or try “oatmeal soup” by taking a handful of oatmeal and five cups of water. Boil this for five minutes, then drain the oatmeal and drink the water. Butter is also a great fat to increase the production of milk. Eat every two hours, increase the amount of supplements you are taking, and drink raw milk.

Never give up and always try to find new resources! At the least, try to take a few days to just nurse and eat and give your baby unlimited access to nursing. Enjoy your time with your new baby!!

I recommend pumping and saving from birth. Hopefully you will have an abundant supply of milk so use a hand pump on one breast while nursing from the other. When I first started nursing I thought I would have enough milk to nurse Ava for a lifetime but then my supply dropped at three months and I wish I had some frozen to give to her.

If you need to use formula, visit [www.westonaprice.org](http://www.westonaprice.org) for recipes on how to make your own formula at home. Many of the store brands contain toxic chemicals and heavy metals that are dangerous to your baby, and are known to suppress the immune system. A great trick is to combine any expressed breast milk and add it to formula to make it thicker.

## *Post partum depression and how to get help.*

Many women experience depression after childbirth and I believe this is part of the process. The lack of sleep, physical and mental exhaustion, and also the feeling of an “empty belly” can be overwhelming.

The first step in preparing for this time is to support yourself before and during pregnancy with good nutrition for your adrenals, which are the glands that handle stress. The more you support the adrenals the less risk of depression after birth. Use sea salt on all your food, eat every two hours, and snack on good, natural fats such as nuts and avocados.

After you have given birth and if you are feeling depressed or you have the ‘baby blues’ it is very important that you reach out and talk to someone. Talk with your doctor, midwife, family, or seek the help of a therapist. It is very common to experience sadness if your birth did not follow the plan that you had dreamed of. Most importantly, do not beat yourself up, you didn’t do anything wrong. Journal about what actually took place, how you feel about the events, and what needs to be done to help you recover. Birth trauma is a real emotion and can be experienced by anyone at any birth. Most importantly, if you do not receive help for yourself, you are not able to give 100% to your new infant. If you need to take time off, make the arrangements to do so. The better you take care of yourself, the better you can care for your new family.

For herbal relief of depression check out Depressease, Tranquil, or Trankwill from Shawnee Moon Herbaceuticals. Talk with your doctor if you are nursing about using herbs and their effect on milk. Visit [www.ShawneeMoon.com](http://www.ShawneeMoon.com) for more information and to purchase.

## *Bibliography and Resources for your journey*

### **Supplies for Birth**

www.birthwithsol.com is now www.yourwaterbirth.com

### **Breech Babies**

Spinningbabies.com

Webster technique, ICPA4kids.com

### **Breastfeeding:**

www.lalecheleaguestlouis.org

24 hour LLL Helpline:

1-877-4-LALECHE (452-5324)

### **Nutrition/Herbs**

www.ShawneeMoon.com

www.Bodyandmindstl.com

www.yogitea.com or www.yogiproducts.com

www.westonaprice.org

www.ifnh.org

### **Websites**

www.hencigoer.com

www.motherfriendly.org

www.icpa4kids.com

www.givingbirthnaturally.com

www.birthworks.com

www.icea.org

### **Books On Fertility**

*Taking Charge of Your Fertility:* Toni Weschler and www.tcoyf.com

*The Pill: Are You Sure it's for You?* Jane Bennett, Alexandra Pope

### **Books on Birthing**

*Spiritual Midwifery* by Ina May Gaskin

*Hypnobirthing, The Mongan Method* by Marie Mongan

*Natural Childbirth the Bradley Way* by Susan McCutcheon

*Pregnancy, Childbirth, and the New born, The Complete Guide* by Penny Simkin, Janet Whalley

*The Thinking Woman's Guide to a Better Birth* by Henci Goer  
*Back Labor No More*

*Active Birth* by Janet Balaskas

*Journey into Motherhood* by Sheri Menelli

*Birthing from Within: An Extra ordinary guide to childbirth preparation* by Pam England & Rob Horowitz

### **Books For Partners**

*The Birth Partner's Handbook* by Carl Jones

*Husband Coached Childbirth* by Dr. Robert Bradley

*The Birth Partner* by Penny Simkin

### **Books On Baby**

*The Happiest Baby (and Toddler) on the Block* by Harvey Karp

As a chiropractor and a mother, Dr. Alison DiBarto's goal is to empower your family on your journey to be healthy. Originally from Ohio, and a graduate from Wittenberg University, Dr. DiBarto continued her education at Logan College of Chiropractic. She now resides in St. Louis, Missouri, where she specializes in pregnancy, pediatrics, nutrition, and holistic healing modalities. For more information and to contact Dr. DiBarto visit [www.HealingHandsHealingLives.com](http://www.HealingHandsHealingLives.com).

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**[www.JourneyOfHealthWorkshops.com](http://www.JourneyOfHealthWorkshops.com)**

