



**MAN'S
GUIDE
TO
BIRTH**

Danielle Bergum

Man's Guide to Birth – Kindle Edition

1st Edition, December 2015

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Author: Danielle Bergum

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www.esalibirth.com

To my husband, James, who pretends not to listen to my birth ramblings in almost every conversation.

To my son, Gabriel, who may one day provide love and support to his birthing wife.

To my daughter, Isabella, who is blessed to grow up with a positive perspective of birth.

Foreword

by James Bergum

When my wife asked me to write the foreword for the Man's Guide to Birth I thought, "Cool, now I can share the story of a country boy dad who has no interest in all the touchy feely stuff." I never paid much attention to our birth class with our first because the focus seemed to be all about the woman and not much about what the man would be experiencing. Plus, I grew up on a farm watching animals being born and thought this wouldn't be much different. I really didn't want to see videos of other women giving birth; I thought that was a personal thing for only the new mom and dad. I didn't care about seeing a new born baby; I had no connection to babies other than my own.

The birth of my first was such a crazy moment. The only thing I could remember from class was to keep my wife hydrated. Well, she didn't want anything to drink and when I would offer she would say, "No." I thought, "I'm not going to force her to drink. When she is ready for water I will give it to her then." I tried to touch her, and she would push me away. I had faith her body would do what it naturally does – to push the baby out – but I felt so helpless. I felt like what my instincts were telling me wasn't what I was taught about being a good support

person. I knew what pain my body can handle and wanted to take her pain and absorb it into myself. She assured me she was ok, but I wasn't sure with all the noises that came out of her. I felt like I wasn't given any real tools or confidence to be of any help.

When she was pregnant with our second, I thought "No big deal. I went through this once so I know what to do." When the birth team would come out to the house for prenatals, I used that time to do things outside so I never had much of a connection to them. I told my wife, "I don't care" about the choices so she could feel like I wasn't taking anything away from her and she made choices that didn't require me to be involved. After the birth, I was a wreck. That birth was fast and I ended up feeling pushed away from a birth team that I didn't have a connection with. I felt like I couldn't help where my instincts were telling me to help and maybe if I had a better connection with the birth team, I would have had a better experience.

For most men, birth is stressful because they're told they have to be a specific kind of support otherwise they need to hand their support role over to someone else. Most approaches are too touchy feeling and not to the point. The Man's Guide to Birth is different. This book gives you the basic information for sharing the experience with your wife in a way that builds your confidence in each other, even when you're not touchy feely. It makes you

understand how important your role is in making decisions, shows choices outside of birth you'll have to make, provides navigational tools, but mostly assures you that just being yourself is the best support you can offer for a good and healthy birth.

Preface

Developing perinatal (pregnancy, birth, and postpartum) education in a format that makes birth healthier and happier while reaching the mainstream audience has been my passion since I began this journey. In most birth education books and groups, the only ones focusing on real biological birth are those that have a strong focus on achieving emotional connection with their experiences. They're so focused on mom or what to expect (instead of how to affect) that dads are left without effective techniques or confidence.

While creating empowering experiences are certainly encouraged they are naturally achieved through birth choices that support biology and respectful care. My husband and I were in the mainstream with our first child so a lot of the "out there" perspectives pushed us away from delving deeper into biological birth. My husband flipped through a few books when he could, though the wordy presentations were, for lack of a better word, boring. For safety reasons, however, I ended up choosing a home birth based on the facts that were presented in the numerous sources I used. In fact, I was once told "If you don't want to have an empowering experience, then don't plan a home birth." Luckily I knew enough to seek different care – the kind that was straight forward, simple, and effective – and ended up having an empowering

experience simply because of the nature of birth. Now my life has changed in so many profound ways and I can no longer be categorized in that mainstream audience. Though, I remember what that first year of motherhood was like.

While this is not a home birth book, it is a guide for birth (and beyond) of any type at any location for dads in an effective format. It is also certainly intended for the moms who need the same simple information because sometimes all the choices available to us today muddle the basic necessities of a healthy and happy birth. There is so much to learn about the birth industry, but some of that information, unfortunately, takes multiple births to sink in due to the culture in which we live – it did for me, also. We could positively influence more births by starting with basic biology and beginning the journey – not throwing couples into the middle. This is that start.

I have taken the same straight forward approach that follows Esali Birth's Man2Man birth prep classes for this book. This is the information you need in a format that fits the male brain patterns. While this doesn't replace a full birth series, and I encourage you to attend a good one, this can be your textbook along the way. This is your pocket guide. Something that is effective no matter if you have 30 seconds to flip to a page, or a half hour dedicated to finishing the book. You'll be worlds ahead of the game.

Mom, if you're buying this for Dad, set it in a place you know he (and you) will casually pick it up... often. The bathroom maybe? You will not only gain imperative information from this book but your interest will also be piqued to continue researching the whys and hows with the resources provided.

May you have a blessed journey and may you be the best birth partner for that special someone in your life. You are what she needs. Be that. Be you.

Esali Birth offers online self-paced and real-time classes. The [Baby Basket](#) monthly subscription is also a great way of nurturing mom throughout pregnancy. If you find this book helpful, consider becoming a Perinatal Mentor with Esali Birth and hosting Man2Man classes in your community. Visit www.esalibirth.com for more information.

Learn

Research. Listen. Be open to new ideas. This book was made to both guide you simply through this time as well as provoke thought and interest into learning more. Take at least as much time learning about the birth industry and positive parenting as you did for your wedding, buying a new car, gear, tools, a house, or _____ (go ahead – fill that blank in with your passion).

Your baby, your wife, are more important.

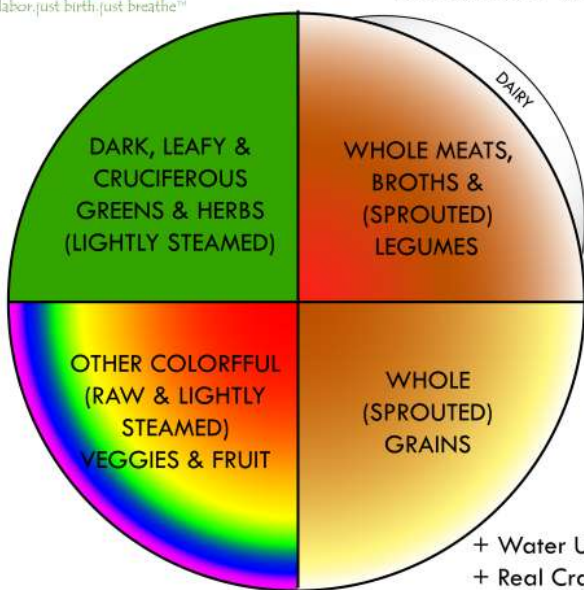
Am I Ready? Checklist

- Listened to positive birth stories
- Researched positive parenting techniques
- Researched the modern birth industry
- Researched birth & newborn routines
- Talked to a home birth midwife
- Toured the local birthing facilities
- Intentionally selected a care provider & team
- Intentionally selected a birth location
- Researched vaccines
- Researched holistic and herbal healing
- Found a breastfeeding support network
- Found a parenting support network

Thrive

Around 5 weeks gestation, your little baby's heart begins beating. Amazing! For the rest of the baby's life this heartbeat will continue to supply oxygen and nutrients throughout their body. A healthy blood supply builds the immune system, builds the organs, and cleanses the body. Creating a healthy blood supply is only done with a healthy environment and healthy food choices. A rainbow of vegetables and fruit, lots of steamed dark greens, and adequate healthy protein through sprouted grains and whole meats will provide all the vitamins and minerals, and energy, needed for a healthy body. At this point, your baby is only the size of a grain of rice, but so much is influencing their growth!

SIMPLE PORTIONS NUTRITION WHEEL



- + Water Unlimited
- + Real Cravings
- + Fermentations

Dads protect the birth space

Males have long been viewed as the protectors of the family. While females certainly have their share of strong protection, males have a unique ability for a female to just melt in their arms. She chose you for a reason. Whatever reason that is, that is what she needs you to be. You are not a coach and this isn't a sports game. You don't need to be a professional doula. You don't need a special technique to make her feel loved and protected. Be yourself. Be who she fell in love with.

Remember your **BRAIN** questions

B – Benefits?

R – Risks?

A – Alternatives?

I – Intuition?

N – Nothing?

When you can't remember something you've learned, these questions will get you on the spot information for any situations that arise.

Give her a hug

Whatever she's feeling, no matter your opinion, she deserves your love and respect always. Demonstrate this. Encourage her to feel these feelings, talk about these feelings, and do journaling and relaxation activities (no matter how miniscule they may seem). Saying this is "just her hormones" is not only cliché, it is disregarding the fact that of course the body functions [well or poorly] because of hormones, but outside influences have an incredible impact on which ones are working (emotionally and physically)... even yours! She will increase her trust of you which improves her ability to relax now, in birth, and through parenting. Physical and emotional health increases the safety in birth as well as balancing stress hormones that influence your baby's brain for life and the ability to progress through labor.

Nausea can be remedied

A lot of nausea is due to toxin release, aversions to processed foods, and imbalanced nutrition. Nettles (purchased from your local herbalist or from MountainRoseHerbs.com) are very nourishing and toning to the body with gentle toxin release. They are packed full of vitamins and minerals needed for a balanced body (for men and women). Add a handful to steep in warm bone broth and mom has a complete meal on those days that she just can't get anything down. They are a great pick-me-up in the morning and soothing on the stomach at any time of day. If she experiences a big energy surge due to all the B vitamins and minerals (enough to keep her awake at night) after ingesting nettles, just keep the nettles for the morning cup of tea.

Nausea-aid

Pinch Ginger Root

1 C Hot water

½ Lemon, juiced

Add ginger to water, cover, and bring to simmer for 10 min. Steep for 10 more minutes, covered.

Strain and add lemon. Add honey to taste.

Get healthy as a family

While mom may be the one gestating this baby, the whole family is responsible for the influence on this baby now and after they're born. Eat healthy and get active. Walking 30 minutes a day, at least, is one of the best exercises for the whole family. Alignment of the spine, pelvis, muscles, and ligaments are all connected to support the body including position of the baby which increasing spontaneous comfortable and progressive labor. Reduce processed foods and sugar (especially white/highly processed forms) with mom. Increase dark greens, wholesome herbs (like nettles and red raspberry leaf), a rainbow of vegetables and fruit, and sprout your beans and grains. The more you do together, the more she'll feel encouraged. The best place to start is checking out Michael Pollan's book *Food Rules*, and visiting www.whfoods.org and www.nutritiousmovement.com.

Daily Routine

Watch your posture – Walk Tall & Sit up Straight

30 Min. Walking (plus an active lifestyle)

30 Min. Stretching & Toning (Yoga, Pilates...etc.)

Use a stand-up desk or therapy ball at a desk

Oxytocin is one of the most important hormones for the perinatal period

Oxytocin creates happiness and bonding. Oxytocin progresses labor and creates enjoyment of birth. It keeps postpartum hemorrhage at bay. It releases breastmilk. It initiates bonding. Oxytocin is the love hormone. Synthetic versions (like pitocin and syntocinon) do not replicate oxytocin's reactions in the brain. In only a natural healthy birth, oxytocin will increase higher than at any other point in her life (even more than with an orgasm) in the first moments after birth. The more oxytocin a mom makes now, the easier it is for her body to increase her oxytocin later. The same goes for all humans, therefore anything that has the potential to make mom feel loved and connected will make her feel even more loved and connected exponentially each time oxytocin can be released.



OXYTOCIN



Adrenaline

Trust is key to a relaxed birth space

With trust, oxytocin levels will rise as high as possible and birth will progress more smoothly. Fear and adrenaline will decrease and less pain will be experienced. With fear and stress, the “fight or flight” hormones will suppress the release of oxytocin by telling mom “this is not a safe place to birth.” Create trust with anyone who will be on the birth team – you, family, friends, staff, providers...etc. – and with your environment. Go into the birth knowing everyone that will be a part of this experience. This is not only for a happy experience, but a healthy one as well. Remember, also, that smaller birth teams mean less stress and less influence on the birth – so keep those to a minimum.

Make decisions that support your birth philosophy

Do not expect to change policies in the middle of labor and birth. Do not expect to argue for what you want; there are providers and locations available no matter where you live willing to offer your wishes. Even though laws support mom's right to make decisions for her birth (and if necessary, she should exert those rights – learn more at www.improvingbirth.org) this is not the time to be stressed and arguing. Dad's role should be to love mom not negotiate with the birth team. Mom AND Dad should be able to enjoy this experience. Be honest with yourself about your birth environment and your idea of health for mom and baby. Birth guides (a.k.a. birth plans) are reminders of mom's wishes for the birth team and a discussion tool for prenatal appointments, but they don't replace good decisions. If you are using a birth guide, take those moments of early labor to whip up a batch of cookies to present to the staff along with the guide and sweeten them up a bit. However, no amount of sugar will sweeten a sour choice.

You can handle it

Yes, you can – anything. You can handle pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding and parenting. You can also handle loss. Should any change happen, remember your BRAIN questions. Should you have to make alternate decisions ask for privacy and patience. Let yourself feel every emotion – sadness, anger, resentment, aloneness. These are all part of the grieving process. Accept meals and know that each of you need your own set of time. Give mom time. Give siblings time. Give family time. Ask for time yourself. Expect questions, discussion, and unwarranted comments and questions. Everyone has different ways of dealing and what hurts one person is helpful to others. Everyone is trying to heal.

You can take a lock of hair, keepsakes from the pregnancy or birth. You can take photos, sing and rock your baby, and have a ceremony – no matter the age. Take an evening to create both a Living Will and a Last Will now, even if they aren't official. www.stillbirthday.com is an amazing resource for every situation surrounding loss as well as professional support networks across the whole world.

Take time for journaling

What do you want to know about pregnancy, birth, and parenting? What things really have you curious? Write these down and do a little research with mom.

Eye gaze daily

Look into each other's eyes for at least 2 uninterrupted minutes every day. When was the last time this happened? During your wedding? This is one of the easiest ways to increase oxytocin and trust. If you can't do this in person, do it through video chat. You may start laughing when you do this, and this is OK - you're getting the awkwardness away and increasing oxytocin through happiness.

Say some birth vows to each other. You can use the following as a prompt or get creative and write your own.

Birth Vows

_____, I love you.
(mother's name)

You will be a great mother because _____.
I will do my best to protect you and keep the
memory of your birth beautiful.

_____, I love you.
(father's name)

You will be a great father because _____.
I trust you to protect me and support me through
this birth.

Create skin to skin contact daily

Add skin to skin contact to your eye gazing routine as often as possible. Whether you're simply touching hands or offering a relaxing massage with long smooth strokes, you'll take some quiet moments of which baby will benefit. Skin to skin contact also increases oxytocin and trust and is an added bonus for men who crave physical connection. Additionally, this is an amazing soothing technique for parenting, so start the habit now. Once your baby is born, practice kangaroo care (skin to skin) as much as possible, especially for a premature baby. For more information on the amazing benefits of kangaroo care, visit www.kangaroomothercare.com.

Three Nice Things

Say three nice things to each other every day. Mom starts while dad quietly listens and thinks about her words and what they mean. Dad, you finish while mom listens and thinks about your words. Do this in person with skin to skin contact and looking into each other's eyes. At minimum do this over the phone. Written words are effective if this is the only form of communication available - but speak them eye to eye when you have the opportunity. When you don't, make it fun and mail a letter, leave a sticky note on her morning mirror, or place a poem in her lunch box. Get back to relationship basics - those techniques never age. Remember that eye gazing technique? Add that in, too. This builds oxytocin, love, trust, and happiness. Shouldn't you be doing this anyway?

You're an amazing cook. You are such a wonderful spouse. You're beautiful. You make me feel so happy. I love the dinner you made last night. I'm so glad you're going to be the parent of my child. You're the best companion I could ever ask for. I love spending my life with you. I enjoy just being near you. I love the way you hold my hand. I feel so relaxed when you touch me. Your eyes are hypnotic. You make life so fun. You're so strong.

Just breathe™

Breathe intentionally. Breathe like you are filling every last cell with oxygen. As you walk her through, do this exercise with mom. Tell her to breathe like she is reaching fresh air to the baby pushing baby through the pelvic floor and surrounding them with love. When you have inhaled completely, exhale every last ounce of breathe by using the muscles of your abdomen and pelvic floor and expel all negative from within your body. Baby acts like a piston moving down and up against the pelvic floor. This helps tone your abdomen and pelvic floor and relaxes your body, which increases oxytocin and oxygenation. This deep breathing is one of the easiest relaxation methods. When approaching mom with love as you walk her through, you're also building oxytocin as she sees your interest in learning the best way to help her, and joining her as she breathes. Remember to add in skin to skin touching, three nice things, and eye gazing. Now you have a relaxation method that will see you through anything.

You've got the whole world in your hands

Around the 20th week of pregnancy, your baby is about the length of a wrench - they could easily fit in the palm of your hand. All their organs have been formed and they are now growing and maturing until birth time (which no estimate, no matter how sophisticated, can establish). Mom is probably making milk at this point, though her hormones are suppressing its release. You have so much that you will influence as this baby comes into this world. Learn to speak kind – they will understand your tone. Learn to respect them just as you would respect any adult – they are just as angered or pleased as you are but sometimes don't have the mature communication skills to show this. What are you doing now to learn about Attached Parenting techniques and create a wholesome happy home? Dr. Sears The Discipline Book and ahaparenting.com are great places to begin.

If a mother gestates a baby girl, all her eggs (i.e. your grandchildren) are created in the womb

This means she's influencing multiple generations. Imagine what her grandmother did while she was pregnant that is influencing your child right now. What substances were used in her pregnancy and labor? Twilight sleep? Pesticides? Antibiotics? Cough Syrups? Organic foods? Balanced nutrition? A cocktail of natural love hormones at birth? Did she breastfeed? What foods did she provide as a child? Where they wholesome and picked at their peak of ripeness? Free of a smoking environment? Imagine what your mother did while she was pregnant with you. What about their births? How could this not only influence you and your child, but your grandchildren's lives? How are you influencing your children and your grandchildren and their lives? Perfection is impossible, but how are you swinging the balance in favor of the best options you can choose?

Ultrasounds vibrate cells and friction causes heat

X-rays were used in pregnancy before they were tested as unsafe. That is the same approach taken with ultrasound during pregnancy. What does this friction and vibration do to developing neurons and fetal tissue? Over 200,000 brain cells are created every minute during gestation. If a woman allows a doppler scan at every prenatal to check heart tones, that's at least 30 minutes of high frequency sound waves influencing around 6,000,000 brain cells alone. Not to mention the 15+ minute routine 20-week scan which studies show have a varying degree of accuracy. What if mom receives an intravaginal ultrasound where the ultrasound wand is placed incredibly close to the baby's head? Ultrasound during pregnancy began in the 1950's and wasn't widely used until the 1970's. So, the oldest person possibly exposed to ultrasound during gestation is only around 65. What long term effects do we really understand? How much have autism and other neurological disorders increased over these years?

Praise mom for what she is doing well

Don't point out what she is doing wrong. Just like your children will respond to praise with more behavior that provided them praise, so will she. Humans respond to the feedback they receive for the actions they create. We want more positive in the world and it starts with us!

Helpful comments at any time:

“You’re beautiful.”

“I love that you’re going to be the mother of our child.”

“You’re strong.”

“You can do this.”

“Let’s take a long deep breath together and think this through.”

“You’re not irrational, I know this might be tough for you, but I’m here to help.”

“I love you.”

Take time for journaling

Write a love note to mom. Tell her how much you appreciate her and what you're looking forward to with your new baby. When you're done, mail it to her.

Don't talk during labor

Encouragement and loving conversations are wonderful during pregnancy and postpartum; however, birth is not the time to talk. Learn her wishes during pregnancy and then make decisions during birth that support her desires. If you know her and what she wants, you won't need to ask. In fact, it will be easier for her primal brain to push you away during labor if she doesn't want a massage right now than it will be for her logical brain to take over and process a question that elicits a verbal response. In addition, put down the phone or tablet or whatever device might easily grab your attention. No matter how peaceful mom seems to be, she will remember your attentiveness. Just as she is taking a break from everything else, so should you. When not physically supporting her, support her with a loving presence which sometimes means more than touch or talk. Furthermore, turn down the noises in the room, cover machines, and turn down the lights. Let her instinctual/primal brain take over during birth with a quiet, calm, and dark environment.

Sleep and Be Intimate

Dogs are mammals. Cats are mammals. Cows are mammals. Horses are mammals. Have you ever seen a mammal birth or read about it? Most people leave them alone, right? They tend to birth in the dark, right? Humans are mammals, too. They need to feel calm and safe with their environment and the people surrounding them. In fact, natural melatonin (the sleep hormone of night) synergizes with oxytocin (the love hormone of calm) to enhance uterine contractions. While our communities may teach cultural-derived fear from their own mislead birth experiences and believe birth can be so easily tracked and medically managed (as most births in the past 100 years were medicalized in one way or another) our instinctual brain still understands the very primal nature of birth. Hormones will react the way they were intended thousands of years ago. Mom needs her biology supported with safety and trust. Provide this feeling. Provide an environment conducive to sleep... or love making (the emotionally connected, willful and loving, excited to experience kind). Both prime the labor hormones and enhance relaxation.

Talk to a home birth midwife

Even if you're not expecting to plan a home birth, have a consult with them anyway and see what services they provide and how they can specifically help you prenatally, during birth, and postpartum as well as how they view birth so differently from a medical provider. Home birth is shown to be as safe as, and often safer (due to more attentive care as well as less interventions and iatrogenic - provider caused - complications) than hospital birth. Be sure to explore your options and select the best provider for baby, mom and her personality. Don't pick a title; pick an experience – because a happy experience most often means a healthy experience. Mom isn't trying to be a super hero, she's trying to start her parenting journey off the way nature intended – happy and healthy just like her baby. Home birth providers are trained in natural birth. Hospital providers (whether midwife or obstetrician) are trained in medical birth. What type of birth do you want? What is your idea of health for mom and baby?

Birth in the most comfortable place for mom

If mom's whole body melts when she walks in your front door, then the cervix will do the same. If a place (or person) makes her mind or heart tense, it will do the same to the cervix. She needs to feel safe and comfortable so adrenaline (fight or flight) decreases and oxytocin (the love hormone) rises. You also need to feel safe and comfortable so your fight or flight response won't cause mom to worry about you. If her comfort space causes anxiety for you, a doula might be helpful during birth. A relaxed mom allows labor progression.



Follow your instincts

Moms' body will tell her how to move, vocalize, and push. NO ONE can feel what she feels and she can feel her baby work with her from the inside. Suggestions for pushing and positions are unnecessary at best and harmful at worst. She may need positive reassurance on occasion, but her body has the instinctual knowledge to birth as many of her ancestors before (long before... in tribal cultures) had. Your instinctual knowledge also allows you to be the best support for mom as well. It doesn't matter how experienced a professional is, you both know each other. You both got the baby here without direction or suggestions. You both can get the baby out without direction or suggestions. Be confident in your decisions for what mom has already told you she desires.

Doulas don't replace dad

While not all moms need a doula, when they do choose to hire one, doulas are often there to guide dads. In addition to providing dads with the ability to use the bathroom, grab some snacks, or take the occasional nap so they can better support mom, doulas encourage dad's supporting role in birth. Hire a doula that communicates well with both mom and dad. Select a doula that loves being in the background so that when mom remembers her birth, she remembers dad's presence, and little of hers. Choose a doula that increases your relationship, your confidence, and your ability to support. Doulas will be communicating with dads the most, so make sure you all get along.

Induction with synthetic oxytocin doubles the risk of cesarean

Inductions are either performed for convenience (the provider's or family's) or for medical reasons (most of which risks are actually increased with induction). Induction reduces natural oxytocin, increases pain for mom and baby, decreases oxygen supply and stress to the baby and increases overall risks (including death of mom and baby). Induction medications suppress hormones needed for breastfeeding initiation and milk supply. Most moms with a BISHOP score (which determines how effective induction will be based on cervical texture, dilation, baby's position...etc.) high enough to elicit a successful induction will likely birth within the week without any medications. Some research suggests a cesarean is less stressful on mom and baby than an induction, and you can read more at www.primalhealthresearch.com in addition to www.childbirthconnection.com. A great book is also *Childbirth and the Future of Homo Sapiens*.

Babies can be born without vaginal exams

Vaginal exams are uncomfortable, introduce bacteria to the birth canal and baby, and can decrease the progression of labor. Vaginal exams cannot determine when the baby will be born; they are only a small piece of information at one point in time. Though a vaginal exam can indicate the immediate position of the baby, this doesn't tell us what will happen next. Mom may birth in moments when her cervix indicates otherwise, and mom may need some privacy and a lot of patience when it appears baby is ready to be born. There are other ways of determining the transformation of labor besides invasive vaginal exams such as the thickness of the fundus which is measured at the peak of a contraction. A smaller space between the top of the uterus and the base of the sternum will be noticed as dilation moves the muscles of the uterus to the fundus throughout labor.

Be patient and let mom rest

10 cm is the average size of a baby's head but the cervix can be smaller or larger than 10 cm. Mom's emotional and physical signs are a better indicator of the progression of labor, but still cannot determine when the baby will be born. She will progressively become less able to talk, more concentrated on contractions, possibly high on beta endorphins (which act like morphine), and likely remove more and more clothing as labor progresses. Give mom her quiet, calm, and dark space - and a lot of patience - allowing the best environment for progression. You may see a "lull" in contractions as mom rests after laboring (rotating the baby and moving the baby down the birth canal) to pushing. Her body, and your baby, needs time to rest before the birthing contractions begin so stress is reduced, tearing is minimized (if at all), she's less likely to get tired, and unnecessary interventions are decreased.

Waterdurations soothe (a.k.a water birth)

Water can make moms very comfortable by relieving pelvic pressure, providing soothing comfort, and giving mom a private space. While laboring in water can slow labor and moms may need to be reminded to get up and walk/move around, water is a natural way of relieving discomfort. Remember that because the water pressure exerted on the baby when they're born is so similar to that of when they're in the womb, the initial APGAR score is best postponed for another minute to accommodate the baby emerging from the water.

Birth Tub (rentable after use w/ new accessories)

Large kiddie pool or approximately a 150 gallon tank from a farming supply store

2 Large thick plastic sheets/pool liners – one for a liner and one for under the tub to protect flooring

2 Garden Hoses w/ 1 faucet adaptor – one for filling and one for draining to a toilet

Pool thermometer – keep water around 100°F and a fish tank scoop net (for fishing out feces...etc.)

Take time for journaling

Write a letter or a poem to your baby. Tell them what you can't wait to experience with them. Tell them how you plan to be an amazing daddy.

Don't cut the cord

The placenta is the baby's lifeline during the transition to lung breathing after the birth. This transition is a process to naturally expel the fluid from the lungs and allow the body to change from receiving oxygenated blood via the placenta to breathing with their lungs. If there are breathing problems, don't cut off their only oxygen supply! Not to mention, 1/3 of their blood is still circulating from the placenta to their body, and they deserve all they can get to avoid problems like anemia! This circulation slowly allows the placenta to detach from the uterine wall giving the uterus time to contract and prevent Postpartum Hemorrhage.

Emergency Birth Prep

A small piece of placenta in the mouth helps to stop a hemorrhage. DON'T clamp or cut the cord!

Don't rush to the hospital if baby is coming now. In most cases, do nothing. Babies are birthed, not delivered. Mom on her side can slow a fast birth and she can instinctively catch her own baby.

All fours and upright positions for mom are best.

Deep noises decrease pain and open the cervix.

Breastfeeding prevents jaundice

Babies that poop expel bilirubin (a byproduct of oxygenated red blood cells breaking down which the baby no longer needs because they're breathing with their lungs). If the baby looks like they're jaundiced, get good lactation support ASAP! Baby's head should tilt back, not forward, so they can nurse and swallow. How well can you drink with your chin tucked to your chest? Babies are just like you, only smaller. Baby's mouth needs to open wide before latching. Mom may need to compress her breast to keep baby awake, help baby get milk, and get baby's mouth over the nipple and onto the areola. Babies breastfeed, they don't nipple feed. Don't limit nursing; baby's learn to breastfeed by breastfeeding. Get the baby assessed for tongue and lip ties by a qualified person who understands the impact of ties on breastfeeding. All of these are best remedies for physiological jaundice and they should be used first.

Tongue ties cause a lot of breastfeeding issues

From painful nursing to jaundice and low milk supply as well as fussy babies and babies that don't calm or sleep well - get those tongue ties assessed! Laser revisions are the safest and easiest with the least amount of pain, bleeding, and risks. A quick 30 second procedure and nursing right afterwards can mean the difference between mom not nursing and a long and healthy breastfeeding relationship. Remember, also, that its going to cost less to pay for a revision than buy formula. Many insurance companies will cover this procedure at least in part. Additionally, tongue ties affect facial and jaw development, speech development, solid foods, bottle feeding, breathing, lock jaw, snoring... and so much more! Visit www.kidsteeth.com for more information.

Keep your baby intact

While genitalia of a male and female look similar until around 7 weeks gestation when what would be the clitoris in females forms the penis in males, your baby's genitals will never look the same as yours, not even if Surgical Penis Reduction (a.k.a Circumcision) is performed for this reason. Male Genital Mutilation (the equivalent of the illegal Female Genital Mutilation – which would actually hold more, yet still unnecessary, health benefits if legal) is a cosmetic painful surgery removing 1/3 of the baby's protective foreskin which exposes the internal prepuce (like slicing off the attached part of the fingernail) and reducing overall function of the penis as well as risks of hemorrhage and death. If this surgery is on your to-do list, take some time to research more before you make a decision at www.thewholenetwork.org.

Aluminum is a neurotoxin

The FDA suggests no more than 25 micrograms of aluminum per day for an adult. Hospital born babies routinely receive 250 micrograms at birth in the Hep B vaccine not to mention the upwards of 1200 micrograms of aluminum given over the next 2 months in vaccines. The FDA requires aluminum warnings on all injectables... except vaccines. Do your research. Aluminum isn't the only questionable ingredients in vaccines either. Other ingredients include aborted fetal tissue, monkey blood cells, thimerosal/mercury (yes, still present in some), formaldehyde, albumin serum made from human blood, MSG/yeast, eggs, and so much more. Also note that these ingredients can fall under a variety of disguising names. The Vaccine Book by Dr. Sears is a simple start to at minimum an alternate vaccine schedule to reduce toxin overload. www.NVIC.org is also another place to begin your research.

Colostrum (baby's first milk) is a great antimicrobial and antiviral

Not only is colostrum great for the internal immune system, but it also is wonderful for topical treatments. Colostrum, unlike breastmilk, is only available for a short period of time in a limited supply. Colostrum helps to coat the intestinal tract to prime baby's gut for life. Anything added as an alternative to the gut during these few months, and especially the first days, will colonize the gut and have long term influences. In addition, colostrum (and breastmilk) can cure pink eye and other eye infections - with less side effects of traditional medicines like erythromycin commonly given to newborns at birth.

Limit visits to 15 minutes

Reduce visitors to an absolute minimum the first week of birth. Baby needs the family's germs only and they're easily overstimulated. Mom needs to nurse and feel comfortable getting the hang of it. After the first week, limit visits to 15 minutes. Dad needs to be the one to say "Thank you so much for stopping by, now mom and baby needs to rest." It can be awkward latching baby on at first or having a trash can in the bathroom full of postpartum pads when there are others around. Mom, nor you, needs to clean more than necessary or entertain. If someone incredibly helpful is stopping by to do the dishes, do laundry, take out trash, and give mom time to take a shower or sleep – and everyone enjoys their company – than by all means invite them to stay!

Make a door sign like the following:

DO NOT KNOCK!

Mommy & Baby are resting.

You may call/text _____

Prepare healthy freezer meals

Stock your freezer with wholesome foods during the last weeks of pregnancy that can be easily made once the baby is born. When someone asks to help, ask for a fresh made healthy/balanced meal or trays of vegetables, fruit, hummus, nuts, and other wholesome snacks with adequate protein and greens. Sign up with online meal calendars to pick the best dates for a meal. You will be thankful for meals and snacks throughout the whole postpartum period. Make snack trays weekly so everyone will snack better with less stress.

Sausage & Kale Soup

2 Qt. Chicken Broth

3 Large Carrots, diced large

3 Lg. Potatoes, peeled, diced large

1-2 Links Turkey Keilbasa (or any healthier meat choice as well as tofu or sprouted beans)

3-5 Kale Leaves, torn to bite-size pieces

Pepper/Spices to taste

Add all ingredients & freeze or mix fresh. Heat on medium, covered, until veggies are done. For a crock pot, cook on high for 3-5 hours.

Prepare nursing stations

Mom's job is to nurse the baby. Dad's job is to help her nurse the baby. Put healthy one-handed snacks, a water bottle, tea in a glass infuser, and activities (books, phone, tablet...etc.) in a bag or in baskets throughout the house where she likes to nurse. She'll appreciate not needing to get up for these things when she discovers her overwhelming thirst or boredom as she nurses her baby for the 20th time during the day.

Weekly Checklist

Clean the bathrooms

Take out the trash

Make a veggie tray

Make a fruit bowl

Make protein-rich sandwiches

Blend a nut mix with dried fruit

Blend some granola with dried fruit

Fill up water bottles each evening

Give mom 30 minutes to take a relaxing bath

Hold your baby

Your baby won't spoil. In fact, studies show babies that are responded to are more independent as they grow older. Your baby needs your protection and comfort. This develops their communication and neurological function for life. Respond to your baby's cues (crying is a last sign of a need). Babies want to be near you, always. They are designed to be near you, always. They are designed to be connected, close, and happily socializing humans. Children will also learn love the way you teach it to them. They are born into the world expecting love. If the love they are shown looks like yelling, hitting/smacking, crying, frustration, and annoyance – they will grow into adults that not only act that way towards others, but expect those actions as an acceptable form of love. Now is the time to take a look at our past and learn from it for our future... our children's future. You can expect a learning curve as you figure out how to parent your children, but one thing will always be true no matter their age - you simply cannot show positivity and love to your baby too much.

Co-sleeping and breastfeeding reduce the risks of SIDS

When a baby is breastfed they do not become overfull. Their blood sugar is less instable. Their neurological development is normal for their body. Many SIDS studies are linked with formula feeding and drug use (including tobacco and alcohol). Baby should sleep in warm fitted clothing, without loose bedding, on a firm mattress, and next to mom on a mattress that is on the floor or with a safety rail. When babies sleep next to their mother they barely have to wake to nurse which means more sleep for the whole family. More sleep means more happiness and better overall breastfeeding success. At minimum, keep baby in the same room with you in a side car or basinet. For more information on co-sleeping safety and so much wonderful parenting advice, visit www.askdrsears.com.

Take time for journaling

What are your expectations for parenting? How involved do you expect to be? Write about ways that you can increase your family connection and be an intentional and attached parent.

Ask for help

Frustration is normal as a new parent. Without the help of a community surrounding you throughout the day, it can get a little overwhelming at times. Find your community or find a doula and support group to help with daily chores and errands. Many parenting groups have service swaps to share babysitting and similar. Don't let your stress build to the point where you're taking out your exhaustion on your baby. It takes very little force to damage your baby's spine and brain - and shaken baby syndrome can happen with even the most level headed person when exhaustion sets in. Sleep deprivation is a serious neurological concern. We were not made to do this alone. Don't add extra work or overbook your schedule and use help whenever you can, no matter how old your children are. Use the contacts page in the back of the book to write a list of helpful numbers of people in your community. When mom has questions, take the initiative and give someone a call... especially for breastfeeding help.

Perinatal depression is high in western cultures

A mom (or dad) experiencing prenatal depression will have a higher chance of experiencing postpartum depression. While many couples experience some anxiety, it is important to keep it in check and get help, counseling, or a friend to chat with as soon as you feel those feelings. Postpartum depression can also come from an unhappy birth experience (whether due to side effects from medications or sadness over the birth itself) and a “healthy baby” isn’t all that matters. Mom matters just as much and may need good postpartum counseling, mood balancing herbal teas, or in some cases medication. A great birth filled with bonding hormones can prevent difficult postpartum experiences. However, a mom after a great birth can also do too much and create exhaustion which peaks around 4 weeks postpartum. Baby blues are common, but these are signs that support is needed (yes, even for dads). Sadness is often from being overtired and overworked. Remedy this with good nutrition, light activity, and lots of support.

Find your local breastfeeding guru

They might be an IBCLC (certified lactation consultant), La Leche League Leader, or another mom with a lot of experience. Ask around and find the one with the best reviews and activity in the community from birth through weaning. As soon as there are questions, dads need to get in touch. Don't let questions become painful sensations. Most difficulties in the infant stages are remedied with good breastfeeding advice and a lot of pediatricians don't have much knowledge on breastfeeding. Dr. Jack Newman's website as well as www.kellymom.com are some of the best resources for not only finding great information no matter where you live but getting linked up with someone helpful in your community who really knows their stuff.

Babywear

Whatever you want to call it, this is one parenting trend that has its roots since the beginning of time. Don't grab for a crotch dangler though as these can cause hip dysplasia and babies don't really like their weight pulling on their pelvic area. Use a woven or knit wrap, or a soft structure carrier, a ring sling, or any carrier that properly supports their posture and a natural way while keeping them in an upright position. A babywrap and carrier should mimic the natural way you would hold your baby on your front, hip, or back. When on your front, they should be close enough to kiss and snugly secure. There are no carriers that are the best, they are personal preference and you can usually find a lending library or a store near you that will let you try before you buy. This is the best piece of baby gear you'll ever spend your money on or request on your gift registry! Or, you can totally make your own on the cheap from a SPOC (simple piece of cloth).

Don't worry; sex gets better

Many dads are worried about how the birth is going to affect sex. While there needs to be some rest and healing time for mom, the folds of the vagina are designed to expand during birth (as they even do during arousal), and contract quite nicely. It is a little like opening a new sheet and then trying to fold it back and fit it into the package again. It will fit, but there are a lot more folds. This is great news for guys! It's like a "ribbed for *his* pleasure" sheath with numerous more places of contact for stimulation. It's not only different, it's better. And being attentive and proactive in your positive energy during postpartum only increases the relationship and new bond having a new found emotional impact.

Evening primrose oil breaks up scar tissue

Some moms are still unfortunately receiving episiotomies, despite their damage and unnecessary use. Stitching is often used for healing (though with most tears, moms who are resting as they should will heal well without stitches or with the use of seaweed). Stitching, especially when done improperly can cause tissue to pull and if done when swelling is present, will be painful as the swelling goes down. All of this also increases scar tissue around the vulva which can be painful, especially during intercourse. If mom is experiencing this, pick up some evening primrose oil from your local pharmacy (available OTC) or MountainRoseHerbs.com. Mom can gently rub this over her scar tissue daily in the shower and she'll likely notice less discomfort in just a few weeks. This can also help in the case of cervical scar tissue after LEEP or D&C procedures.

Family Planning

Medicinal birth control carries many lifelong risks for newly conceived babies, as well as mom or dad through procedures. The Fertility Awareness Method (FAM) involves simple charting of cervical fluid, basal body temperature, breastfeeding, menses, and other cycle signs to prevent or encourage pregnancy. When signs are correctly monitored (an egg-white consistency cervical fluid is very fertile) and protocol followed, FAM is just as effective - without side effects - as any form of birth control. Catholic communities offer NFP (Natural Family Planning) couples classes and you may be able to find one in your area. The difference between NFP and FAM is that NFP uses abstinence rather than barrier methods during the fertile time. Abstinence is, of course, the only guarantee of not getting pregnant and learning fertile signs as a couple helps everyone, even those that use medicinal birth control understand their body better. Understanding fertility signs is an empowering part of a couple's relationship. Read more in Toni Weschler's book *Taking Charge of Your Fertility* and at www.tcoyf.com.

This is a journey

We cannot plan birth, but we can influence it a lot. This is the first step into making decisions for your family... your child. While many will have their opinions on how you raise your child - your partner is the one that births this baby. She is (and you are) the one that nourishes this baby. You are the one that is home with your baby and is responsible for their well being. Be their voice, because they don't have one yet. They will have so many years to choose things for themselves and be influenced by this culture and many others. Now is the time to choose wholesome and healthy options for them with a holistic approach that builds the foundations for their future. Unconditional love will always see you through. Pray and let your spirit guide you. With each pregnancy and birth you will grow and learn. Blessings on this beautiful journey!

Suggested Reading

[*Breastfeeding Made Simple*](#) by Mohrbacher/Tackett

[*Cheers to Childbirth*](#) by Lucy Perry

[*Childbirth and the Evolution of Homo Sapiens*](#) by Michel Odent

[*Childbirth Without Fear*](#) by Grantley Dick Read

[*Creating Your Birth Plan*](#) by Marsden Wagner

Emergency Childbirth by Gregory White

[*Food Rules*](#) by Michael Pollan

[*Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering*](#) by Sarah Buckley

[*Herbal Healing for Children*](#) by Demetria Clark

[*How to talk so Kids will Listen*](#) by Faber/Mazlish

[*Peaceful Parent, Happy Kids*](#) by Laura Markham

[*The Discipline Book*](#) by Dr. Sears

[*The Vaccine Book*](#) by Dr. Sears

[*What Your Pediatrician Doesn't Know Can Hurt Your Child*](#) by Susan Markel

Additional Resources

ahaparenting.com

askdrsears.com

bestforbabes.org

breastfeedinginc.ca

chriskresser.com/why-undisturbed-birth

cord-clamping.com

drjaygordon.com

drmomma.org

esalibirth.com

glorialemay.com

hencigoer.com

improvingbirth.org

kangaroomothercare.com

kellymom.com

kidsteeth.com

midwiferytoday.com

primalhealthresearch.com

spinningbabies.com

stillbirthday.com

thewholenetwork.com

tcoyf.com

wearyourbaby.com

Contacts

Make a contact list and add the following to your fridge:

- 2-3 Breastfeeding Support Persons
- 1-2 Doulas for pregnancy, birth, and postpartum
- 1-2 Care Providers, at least one a midwife
- 2-3 Mom groups including the dates, times, and locations of their monthly meetings as well as web addresses to their support groups and resources list

About the Author

Danielle Bergum is a wife to her soul mate of 17 years and a mother to two home-birthed children. She is the founder of Esali Birth and hosts various classes and support groups in the Mid-Ohio Valley as well as online.

Danielle enjoys creating a homestead with her family in the hills of West Virginia while homeschooling their children. She loves learning, sharing, designing, photography, herbal studies, wildcrafting, and being a resource for families everywhere.

