

The Best Birth Nest is ...

- Near the bathroom
- Near the bed
- Near the pool
- Quiet
- Able to adjust temperature

Make it comfortable

- Music – Put together a playlist of music you like. You might want to consider a variety of music depending upon where you are in your labor. You might want livelier music during early labor, but when the work gets more serious, you might want soothing music or nature sounds.
- Candles/Lighting
- Organized/Tidy – It doesn't have to be perfect, unless order puts you at ease. At a minimum, make sure that there is a clear path to the bathroom, a place to lay out the birth supplies, and room for your birth team to be in the space with you. For safety, you'll want to also have your stairs free of clutter and a clear path to your home's entry door.
- Pillows
- Blankets
- Consider the scents in the room. Some women find aromatherapy to be helpful, while others are very sensitive to scents during labor. If you want to try aromatherapy, lavender essential oil is very relaxing. Geranium and rose are also used during labor by some midwives. Keep in mind that you don't want the scent to be overpowering and you don't want it to linger. Your desire to continue to smell a particular scent as labor progresses may change. Try making a spritzer of a few drops of essential oil and four ounces of water in a spray bottle. Keep the bottle in the refrigerator until labor begins. Shake and spray as desired. Or, make a rice sock scented with lavender to use for back labor. Fill a new, cotton tube sock with ½ cup of rice and 1-2 tablespoons of dried lavender. Tie a not in the open end of the sock or sew it closed about a half inch above the rice. Microwave it for a minute or so until it is warm.
- Something comfortable to wear – You'll want to wear something loose-fitting. Nightgowns or big shirts are good choices. If you're going to be in the pool, you may want to wear a bikini top or a sports bra if you're concerned about modesty for any pictures you might want to take.
- Food/Drinks – You should have plenty of juice and snacks on hand for labor. Make up some labouraid (recipe in binder) or buy some Gatorade if you prefer that. Good labor snacks are quick and simple – juice, popsicles, sour candies, soup, yogurt, fruit, crackers, granola bars, etc. Choose things you like to have when you're not feeling well, and have plenty of fluids on hand. It is very important to drink plenty of fluids during labor to prevent dehydration and to keep your energy up.
- Birth pool – Peggy has three pools to choose from. All have their advantages and disadvantages. Read over the information about water birth in your binder, watch some water birth videos, and see if you think water birth is for you. Even if you don't want to actually give birth in water, you may find water to be very helpful during labor. Consider it to be just another tool in your toolbox of coping techniques. Peggy highly recommends laboring in water, especially if this is your first baby.

A Place for Your Birth Team

We don't need much, but it is really helpful if we have a place in your home where we can rest if we need to. Sometimes, birth takes many hours, and we do get tired. If we arrive in the middle of the night and you don't need much support right away, we'll probably try to get some rest after we get everything set up for the birth. If we're there for an extended period of time, we may trade off taking naps so we can be fresh and ready when you need us to be. It is also really nice (but don't go out of your way for it) if there is some coffee with half and half for the morning, and some light snacks we can help ourselves to as needed.

Preparing for Baby's Needs

- Receiving Blankets – Immediately after the birth, we'll need several receiving blankets to dry your baby and help him keep warm while you're holding him. You'll want to save your nicest receiving blankets for after we get your baby dressed, and you'll want to use your oldest receiving blankets for right after the birth.
- First Outfit – Choose something that can be layered to adjust warmth. A good selection would be a onesie, gown, socks, hat, and receiving blanket. You'll also want to have 4-6 onesies, 2-4 cotton hats, socks, and several gowns on hand for the first few days after the birth.
- Diapers – Cloth or paper are both fine, but keep in mind that meconium stains diapers. If you're concerned about meconium stains on your new cloth diapers, you may want to consider buying a package of newborn disposable diapers to use for the first few days until the meconium is done.
- Olive Oil – We use olive oil to help keep meconium from sticking to your baby's bottom. Just get a small squirt bottle and fill it with olive oil to keep it handy for diaper changes.
- Rubbing alcohol, cotton balls, and Q-tips for cord care.
- Car Seat with the base already installed in your car.
- Thermometer – The easiest thermometers to use are the forehead thermometers Peggy uses. You can get them at Costco or Walmart for about \$30. Or, get an inexpensive digital thermometer.
- Newborn stethoscope – This isn't absolutely necessary, but it will help you when you check the baby's vital signs during the first few days postpartum. You can order one for about \$13 from Cascade when you get your birth kit. It can be found at <http://www.1cascade.com>. Just type in 2880 in the keyword field to search for it by item number.

Preparing for Postpartum Needs

- Menstrual pads – overnight extra long with wings
- Underwear – 2 to 3 pair of older snug-fitting underwear to hold pads in place.
- Nightgowns – You'll want 2-3 older nightgowns or old t-shirts for the first few hours. Then, you'll want 1-2 nursing gowns or two-piece pajamas to make for easy nursing access postpartum.
- Nursing bras – Bras from Bravado Designs are made to accommodate the extra fullness you'll have in the first little while after your milk comes in. If you have another style in mind that doesn't have the flexibility in sizing, you'll want to get 2-3 bras in a larger size for the first few weeks.
- Stuff to do while in bed – Of course, your primary focus in the first few days will be to get rest, drink fluids, eat healthy foods, and nurse your baby frequently. However, sometimes you'll get bored and will want something to pass the time. You may want to keep some thank you notes, a journal, the baby book, a novel, The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding, etc. on hand.
- Nursing Pads
- Nursing Pillow

Preparing for Birth Clean Up

- Ammonia – Ammonia is handy for getting meconium out of laundry and carpet.
- Hydrogen Peroxide – Hydrogen peroxide works wonders at getting blood out of carpet and clothing.
- Making the Bed for Birth – Comfy sheets you want to use postpartum, covered with a shower curtain liner or two (get at the dollar store), covered by old sheets you don't mind getting stained. Lay a top sheet over this, and have a blanket or two handy in case you get cold.
- Pillows – Either purchase several cheap pillows you wouldn't mind throwing away afterwards, or put pillows in plastic garbage sacks with drawstrings. The pillows in garbage sacks do slide around a bit, but they will work fine. Either way you decide to do it, you'll want to have 2-4 on hand for the birth.
- Extra shower curtains – You might want to have a few extra shower curtains on hand, especially if you're having a water birth and you're concerned about protecting the floor.
- Laundry – We'll want to use a laundry basket during the birth to gather all of the linens and clothes as they are soiled during birth. After the birth, the laundry should be washed in cold water until completely clean before using warm or hot water or drying.

Other Things You'll Need

- Birth Kit – Order this from Cascade or In His Hands. Keep it near all of the other birth supplies you've gathered from around your home.
- Paper Towels – Used for clean up.
- Tissues – Used for wiping up ultrasound gel for the Doppler, as well as for blowing your nose.
- Toilet Paper
- Plastic bowl – Useful for a variety of reasons during labor – scooping water out of the pool, emesis basin, placenta bowl, etc.
- Crock Pot – Used to keep water warm for perineal compresses
- Cookie Sheet – Used to organize supplies we'll use for the birth. We'll cover it with a chux pad, so it doesn't have to be new or pretty.
- Bath Towels – You'll need 3-4, more if you're having a water birth.
- Wash Cloths – You'll need 6-8. These are used for perineal compresses.
- Electric Heating Pad – Used to keep baby's clothes and blankets warm. If you don't have one, we'll probably have one with us to use as a backup.
- Garbage basket and liner
- Extra kitchen garbage bags
- Space heater – It is good to have one on hand if we'll need to warm up the room after the birth. The room needs to be 70-75 degrees for at least several hours after the birth so the baby can maintain his temperature.
- Fan – You may get hot during labor.
- Lip balm, lotion or oil for massage
- Emergency plan – There is a worksheet in your binder called, "In Case of Hospital Transport." Fill it out, and put a copy on the fridge, near each phone, or put it with your birth kit. We'll have a copy of your emergency plan in your chart, but if the baby comes before we get there, you'll want to have this information handy.
- Your binder – You'll need to have a copy of "If Baby Comes Before The Midwife Does" handy just in case, as well as have your postpartum instructions ready for us to go over with you after the birth.

Preparing the Pantry

In addition to the snacks and drinks to have on hand during labor, have some easy meals on stand-by for the first few days. Neither you, nor your family, will be much in the mood for cooking with a new baby in the house. Postpartum is not a good time to scrimp on nutrition. Your body has been through a lot, and it needs good food and plenty of fluids to replenish what was used during birth. Plus, you're building a milk supply now, so you need even more food postpartum than you needed while you were pregnant! The more you rest, eat, and drink now, the more quickly you will recover from the birth, and the more plentiful and high quality your milk supply will be.

- Freeze a few nutritious casseroles, or arrange to have friends bring you food. Be sure they know you need nutritious food to help you heal after the birth. No fast food, unless it is a last resort!
- Stock your freezer with meal components you can make in advance that can be put together quickly and easily to form complete meals. Freeze them in sizes you would use to make one or two meals for your family. You can grill a bunch of seasoned chicken and steak and slice it into strips to add to salad; brown several pounds of ground beef to quickly make into tacos or mix into other quick meals; cut up meat, cheeses, and veggies, to mix into scrambled eggs or omelettes; make a big pot of brown rice and freeze it in meal-sized packages.
- It will be tough (and probably not a very good idea anyway) to get to the store with a newborn, but you still need to get fruit and veggies. Frozen veggies and fruit are usually the best alternative to fresh. Costco sells large bags of good quality frozen fruits and veggies, and it would be good to have some on hand to use on days where fresh just isn't available. Dried fruits are good to have on hand for quick energy. Mix them with nuts, and you've got a nutritious trail mix to munch on. Dried fruits and nuts are good sources of iron too.

Recording the Birth

If you want to record the birth, you'll want to be sure to have your camera and camcorder charged and ready. You may want to have extra film or an extra memory card for your camera, recordable DVDs or tapes for the camcorder, a charger or additional batteries for both, and a tripod if you want to just turn on the camcorder and let it do the recording during the birth.

Also, think about the kinds of pictures you're hoping to get from recording the birth. Whoever will be handling photography or videography needs to know your wishes. Do you want the pictures to be non-graphic, or do you want up close shots of the birth? Do you want pictures and video only after the birth, or do you want it throughout? Do you want to make sure the flash is turned off to protect your baby's eyes? Make sure the person in charge of recording the birth knows these things in advance. Also, make sure they know how to use the recording equipment BEFORE the birth. The last thing you want to be doing during transition is training someone on how to turn the flash off or how to switch out DVDs on the camcorder.

Your other children

Someone other than you and your husband will have to be available to take care of your other children's needs during the birth. Most children do fine at births, but if they get restless, hungry, or upset, someone other than you and your husband needs to be able to step in to take care of them. This person should be someone your children know and feel comfortable with for extended periods of time, and should be someone who won't mind missing the birth if your children need to be taken elsewhere.

If you want to have your children with you during the birth, and if you think they really want to be there, you should take some time prenatally to prepare them for the birth. There are several books and videos available to help you. However, you will want to make it part of your ordinary life to talk to them at times throughout the pregnancy about what to expect during the birth, what fears they may have (if any), and whether they would like to help. Kids can be assigned jobs during the birth – cord cutter, newborn exam helper, or getting drinks for mom. Some kids, especially teenage girls, may even want to provide some labor support or help diaper and dress the baby. See if there are ways to involve your kids at a level that is sensitive to their needs and abilities.

Friends and family at birth

You may want to invite friends or family to be at your birth with you. Don't feel pressured to invite anyone you really don't think would be supportive, or anyone who isn't willing to stay in the background. This is YOUR birth, so YOU get to decide who will be there. Being invited to attend a birth is a privilege, not something that should be done out of duty or obligation.

If the people attending the birth have never been to a home birth before, you may want to take some time to prepare them for the more "hands off" approach to birthing that midwives use. Our culture expects birth attendants to "do something" to make the birth happen. Midwives are watchful observers and help when they are needed. For someone who has only experienced hospital birth, or has only seen birth as it is portrayed in popular media, homebirth may be a completely foreign concept. You could suggest watching "The Business of Being Born" with them to help them understand why you've chosen the Midwives Model of Care and homebirth. Or, you could just spend time with them to explain what they might expect from the experience.

People like to be useful, so give everyone there a job. Someone can be in charge of meals, another one in charge of making sure the dogs get walked and fed, someone else can be the photographer, etc.

Consider the space you'll be in. If your home or birthing space is small, you may want to limit the number of people at the birth. Your focus during labor needs to be on relaxation and working with your contractions. You need to be as uninhibited as possible in order for you to tune into what your body needs to do to birth your baby. If you're feeling observed, or if you're overhearing conversations and joking around in the next room, you're not going to be able to relax as fully as you need to.