

CHAPTER 2: SO MANY CHOICES

Quiz: Choosing the Best Birthplace and Caregiver for You

There is no single “Best Place to Birth” or “Best Caregiver.” It’s all about finding the best match for you! Long-term satisfaction with the birth comes from finding a great match between you and your care provider: shared philosophy, goals, and expectations. So if you’re a healthy woman expecting a normal birth, the first step is to ask yourself what you want, and then look for the options that best match your wishes. This quiz can help you get started. Circle your answer for each question.

What do you want prenatal appointments to be like?

- A. Quick. I’m really busy and want to get in, take care of business, and move on.
- B. I want to feel like I have time to ask questions, but expect to get most of my info from books and classes.
- C. I want someone who will take the time I need to talk with me about things that worry me.

How comfortable are you in unfamiliar territory?

- A. It’s easy for me to adapt to new places, and I’m comfortable almost anywhere, including hospitals.
- B. I’m okay in unfamiliar places, as long as I have familiar faces and things with me.
- C. I really feel happiest in familiar surroundings, on my own turf. I don’t like being in strange places!

What best describes your feelings about safety during labor, and what might relieve your worries?

- A. I’m worried about all the things that might go wrong. I would feel safe only in a major hospital that could handle any emergency.
- B. I’m feeling pretty confident about birth, but everyone I know has given birth in a hospital, so I guess that would feel safest to me.
- C. I would feel safest with care providers who view birth as a natural life process, not like a medical procedure.

How important is freedom to move around and to make choices in labor?

- A. I’m not worried about limitations on what I can eat, or what I can do. It doesn’t bother me to feel constrained. It’s only one day in my life.
- B. I like to have freedom and choices, but I can work with limitations, if they’re medically necessary.
- C. I want to be able to move when and how I want to move. I want to be able to eat if I’m hungry. I get stressed out when restricted.

Who will be at your birth?

- A. I’m fine with working with a nurse I meet when I arrive at the hospital, and with having my doctor arriving in time for pushing.
- B. I would prefer to have my familiar care provider with me early on in my labor.
- C. I want to establish a relationship with my care providers and know exactly who to expect to attend my birth.

Hydrotherapy: are you interested in laboring or birthing in water?

- A. I don’t care whether I use a bathtub during labor.
- B. I think soaking in a tub during labor would be nice.
- C. I would love to labor in water and have the option to give birth in water.

What pain medication options do you want to have?

- A. I want an epidural available anytime that I ask for it.
- B. I would prefer not to use pain meds, but I want there to be options if I decide I need them.
- C. I want an unmedicated birth, and want to have people around me who know how to help me achieve that.

Where do you stand on the Natural process vs. Medical procedures continuum?

- A. I am totally fine with whatever medical interventions make childbirth quicker, easier, and less painful for me.
- B. I believe that birth is a natural process, but some medical procedures may help it to go smoother.
- C. I want to have as natural an experience as possible, with as few medical procedures as possible.

How do you feel about cesarean?

- A. I'm not concerned about how the baby comes out of me. Either a cesarean or vaginal birth is fine with me.
- B. I would really prefer having a vaginal birth, but if I need a cesarean that will be okay.
- C. I really want to avoid a cesarean.

What will immediate postpartum be like?

- A. I look forward to being in the hospital and having nurses take care of me so I can focus on baby.
- B. I look forward to getting back home after my birth to settle in with baby.
- C. I don't want to spend time in the hospital with baby: I want to be at home.

Scoring: give yourself 1 point for every A you circled, 2 points for every B, and 3 points for every C answer.

(*Note:* You and your partner may want to complete the quiz separately and see how your hopes and expectations compare.)

What does your score suggest will feel best for you?

10–14: You may feel most comfortable at a large regional hospital, with an OB/GYN as your care provider.

15–19: You may be most comfortable at a smaller community hospital with an OB or a family practice doctor as your care provider.

20–24: You may be most comfortable with a midwife as your care provider, either at a hospital or a birth center.

25–30: You may be most comfortable with a midwife at an out-of-hospital birth.*

* A healthy woman with few risk factors can usually choose any birthplace and caregiver that fits her and her family's preferences. However, women with high-risk pregnancies aren't good candidates for out-of-hospital birth and may need a hospital that can provide a higher level of care. If you would prefer a home birth, but need a hospital birth, you can search around for a caregiver who will work with you to help create as much of your ideal birth experience as possible given your health concerns.