

Resources for a Low-Intervention or Natural and Unmedicated Births

We fully support your interest in exploring a low-intervention, natural, or unmedicated birth. An increasing number of expecting parents are asking for a less medicalized birth for many reasons. Some wish to avoid unnecessary interventions, to retain more freedom of movement during labor, or other reap other benefits to the mother and baby.

It is important to understand the differences between “low-intervention”, “natural”, and “unmedicated” births when planning for a birth, and that there are many approaches to laboring without intervention or pain medication.

- Natural birth excludes routine medical interventions, medications, and anesthesia.
- Un-medicated birth is similar in that it excludes medications and anesthesia but may include some medical interventions.
- Low intervention may include some medications and anesthesia and only necessary medical interventions when other methods have failed.

Benefits of Low-Intervention, or Natural and Unmedicated Births:

- Increased connection with experience
- Empowering experience, increased confidence
- Increased agency
- Greater sense of control in the process
- Freedom of movement
- Potentially shorter labor
- Breastfeeding may be easier
- Shorter recovery time
- Potentially shorter pushing time
- More alert baby
- Less complications for mother and baby

Common Misconceptions

There are several misconceptions about birthing in hospital settings. It is entirely possible to have a low-intervention, natural, or unmedicated birth at a hospital setting. Birthing in a hospital does not necessarily confine you to a bed during your entire labor. It is strongly recommended that birthing people have freedom of movement and get up and move as freely as possible to support the progress of labor and the comfort of the birthing person.

Some pain medications may allow you to move freely throughout your birth including those that can be administered intravenously or given using a gas mask. Explore these options with your care provider or doula. It is only when you elect an epidural that you must be in a bed to avoid falls and other accidents, although a great deal of movement is still possible, even with

an epidural depending on the individual. Some patients, for instance, are still able to get on hands and knees, squat, or use a birth bar in bed. A midwife, OB nurse, or doula might help you move through these various positions even while in bed.

Prepare mentally

Pain tolerance is among the biggest concerns for patients who are about to give birth. In the Western world, people are less accustomed to tolerating intense pain. We associate pain with something being wrong that should be fixed, often with medication. But pain during childbirth is normal and necessary. It signals that your body is doing what it needs to do. Every wave of pain gets you closer to the goal: your beautiful baby.

There are many alternatives to medication when it comes to pain relief when choosing a low-intervention, natural, or unmedicated birth. Explore these with your care provider, particularly about what is available at the site of birth you selected.

Some natural pain management methods include:

- Hydrotherapy such as a shower or tub
- Breathing techniques that work for you
- Essential oils or aromatherapy
- Acupuncture and acupressure
- Meditation
- Hypnosis
- Music therapy
- Positional support (such as those guided by a doula)
- Virtual reality

Preparing Emotionally

While many parents-to-be focus on the physical and educational preparation of welcoming baby home, it is also important to consider emotional preparation as a low-intervention, natural, or unmedicated birth can often surface big, unexpected emotions. In addition to childbirth education resources that help prepare oneself intellectually, which are provided below, it is equally important to prepare emotionally for new identities as parents as well as life with baby. This might include meeting with a mental health professional to answer any questions, joining a new parents group, or taking a relationship-based parenting class like the Gottman Institute's [Heart of Parenting](#) or [Bringing Baby Home](#). A trained [Birthing from Within](#) childbirth educator can also help with the emotional aspects of childbirth preparation.

Childbirth Education

Childbirth education is strongly encouraged to help prepare you for the journey. Every labor is unique, and sometimes things don't go exactly as planned. Being prepared for any situation is important – childbirth classes can give you realistic expectations and instill confidence.

Consider starting a childbirth education class between 26-28 weeks gestation. The more you know, the better prepared you'll be.

Patients who attend birthing classes are more likely to have a vaginal birth and less likely to have a baby sent to the NICU, according to the report presented at the 2016 meeting of the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine. Birthing classes can include methods such as Lamaze, Birthing from Within, the Bradley Method, Hypnobirthing, and the Alexander Technique, which teach strategies to cope with labor pain, including rhythmic breathing and positive affirmations.

Local childbirth education providers include:

- [Evidence Based Birth](#)
- [Chicago Family Picnic](#)
- [312Doulas](#)
- [Birthways](#)
- [J'adore Mon Bébé](#)
- [Bloom Yoga Studio](#)
- [Third Coast Birth](#)
- [Hypnobabies](#)
- [Sweet Pea Studio](#)

Doulas

Every birth patient can benefit from a doula. In addition to the care team, and the patient's partner, and other members of their social network, a doula is uniquely qualified to provide continuous birth support. Doulas maintain a consistent presence before, during, and immediately after birth providing emotional, physical, and informational support. Doula involvement in birth has been shown to decrease certain complications and a more satisfying emotional and physical experience. This is particularly true for low-intervention, natural, or unmedicated births as well as unplanned C-sections, medically complex births, or patients with previous traumas.

The value of doulas is well-documented and recognized in the scientific literature. In addition to providing support to obstetric patients, doulas' services translate to improved measurable medical outcomes for both birth patient and infant, and better subjective experience for the or birth patient. Previous studies examining the benefits of doulas demonstrate significant reductions in cesarean births, vaginal births interventions, oxytocin augmentation (inductions), and shortened durations of labor (Gruber et al. 2013). One updated systematic review from 2017 of 27 randomized control trials found significant advantage in providing continuous labor support to birth patients in hospital settings compared to control groups receiving "usual care" (Bohren et al., 2017). Birth patients receiving continuous labor support, regardless of type of person providing support, experienced:

- Shorter labors by 41 minutes on average
- 38% decrease in the baby's risk of a low five-minute Apgar score

Compared to the control groups, it was also found that there were significant differences in outcomes when birthing persons were supported by doulas specifically:

- 39% decrease in the risk of Cesarean sections
- 15% increase in the likelihood of a spontaneous vaginal birth
- 10% decrease in the use of any medications for pain relief
- 31% decrease in the risk of being dissatisfied with the birth experience

Because each of the scientific studies included in the review were carried out differently, it doesn't give us complete answers about how labor support affects outcomes. However, the data is suggestive of the benefits of doulas in improving the likelihood of a shorter, less medicated, and more satisfying birth.

Doula care is not currently covered by insurance; however, most doulas should accept health savings (HSA) or flexible spending accounts (FSA) as payment options. There are also many doulas who work on a sliding scale and several ways to access volunteer doulas for patients who are eligible.

A list of doula resources is below in no particular order.

The Elgin Doula

<https://www.elgindoula.com/>

elgindoula@gmail.com

224-659-3922

Marie Weiss Doula Services

<https://www.marieweiss.net/>

mariejweiss15@gmail.com

612-669-7423

Tiny Tusks Doula

<http://www.tinytusksdoula.com/>

224-688-2994

J'adore Mon Bébé

<https://www.jadoremonbebe.com/>

info@jadoremonbebe.com

312-402-2767

312 Doulas

[312Doulas Birth Made Easier \(hmbirth.com\)](http://hmbirth.com)

Becca and Becca Doulas
<http://www.beccaandbeccadoula.com/>
beccaandbeccadoula@gmail.com

Chicagoland Doulas
<https://www.chicagolanddoulas.com>
info@chidoulas.com
712-540-5917

Love, Your Doula
<https://www.loveyourdoula.org/>
loveyourdoula@outlook.com

Sokana Collective
sokanacollective@gmail.com
847-701-5527

Supported Serenity
<https://www.supportedserenity.com/>
SuppSerenity@gmail.com
224-423-5974

Peaceful Birthing Doula
<https://peacefulbirthingdoula.com>
peacefulbirthingdoula@gmail.com
630-481-6079

Tyo Birth Care
<https://www.tyobirthcare.com>
tyobirthcare@gmail.com
773-669-4437

Doula Services for Teens

Kids Above All
Doula services for teen parents living in Lake County
<https://www.kidsaboveall.org/what-we-do/investing-in-kids-youth/early-childhood-programs/doula/>
773-832-7760

One Hope United
Community doula services for teen parents living in Gurnee, North Chicago, Waukegan, and Zion
<https://onehopeunited.org/doula/>

847-245-6820

Volunteer Doulas

Chicago Volunteer Doulas
Doula services are available on sliding scale
<https://www.chicagovolunteerdoulas.org/>

J'adore Mon Bébé
Volunteer birth doulas available for patients with significant financial or social needs
<https://www.jadoremonbebe.com/communitybenefit>
info@jadoremonbebe.com
312-402-2767

A Note on Mind-Body, Physical Therapy, and Acupuncture

Complementary therapies like physical therapy, acupuncture, acupressure, and massage as part of a broader prenatal preparation plan may be helpful in supporting your birth goals. There is scientific literature suggesting that when used as a complementary therapy before labor, it may confer benefits on pregnancy and delivery including lessening symptoms of discomfort, as well as inducing and shortening labor. An excellent resource by Debra Betts for self-study of acupressure massage for birth can be found [here](#).

Additional resources can be found here:

A Center for Oriental Medicine
Jeanie Lee Bussell, PhD, L.Ac.
info@acfom.com
847-251-5225

New Journey Physical Therapy
<https://www.newjourneypt.com>
224-707-0765

Read More About It

Get Ready to Get Pregnant: Your Complete Pre-pregnancy Guide to Making a Smart and Healthy Baby by Michael Lu

Pregnancy, Childbirth, and the Newborn: The Complete Guide by Penny Simkin

Fully Fertile by Beth Heller, Jeanie Lee Bussell, and Tami Quinn

Expecting Better by Emily Oster

Babies Are Not Pizzas: They're Born Not Delivered by Rebecca Dekker

The Birth Partner by Penny Simkin

Ina May's Guide to Childbirth by Ina May Gaskin

Breastfeeding made Simple by Nancy Mohrbacher

Birthing from Within by Pam England

Magical Beginnings, Enchanted Lives: A Holistic Guide to Pregnancy and Childbirth by Deepak Chopra, David Simon, and Vicki Abrams