



Childbirth

Choosing a Delivery Method

Natural childbirth methods stress using relaxation techniques to cope with the pain and discomfort of labor and delivery. Some suggest that any pain medication at all is unnecessary, while others take a less rigid stance. All do agree that the feelings of the laboring mother are as important as avoiding stress to the baby. The four most-used labor methods are described here.

Lamaze Childbirth Method

- This method of natural childbirth was developed in France by Dr. Ferdinand Lamaze in the early 1950s.
- Lamaze education is committed to helping women have a natural, healthy and fulfilling childbirth experience with very little medical intervention.
- Lamaze stresses changing positions often during labor and not lying flat on your back.
- Lamaze emphasizes focused breathing techniques and the use of a focal point for concentration.
- It teaches women to make informed choices about their health care and to trust their own wisdom.

Bradley Method of Childbirth

- The Bradley Method emphasizes the importance of diet and exercise during pregnancy and teaches deep relaxation techniques to manage pain.
- Dr. Robert Bradley was the first doctor to encourage fathers to be active participants during labor and to be present at the birth.
- Bradley instructors stress changing positions often during labor, walking as long as possible and avoiding laying on your back during labor and delivery.
- The Bradley Method is perhaps the most opposed to using pain medication.
- A large percentage of the laboring mothers who choose this method deliver without drugs.
- Childbirth classes include examining the most common birth scenarios and treatments available so parents can make informed choices about pregnancy and labor.

Water Births

- Although a less-known method of childbirth, water births are gaining in popularity.
- Thousands of water births have taken place without complications.
- Instructors believe that laboring and birthing in water reduces the pain, uses less energy and is less traumatic for the baby.
- Laboring in water is thought to speed up labor overall and shorten pushing time.
- The buoyancy of the water can mean less turning and twisting to remove the baby from the birth canal.
- The mother can ease into a comfortable and supported position, she feels less pressure during uterine contractions and the warm water softens the tissues.
- There's a lower rate of tearing and vaginal trauma during water births.

International Childbirth Education Association (ICEA)

- The ICEA doesn't stick to only one philosophy. It uses a mixture of the positive elements from the Bradley and Lamaze techniques.
- This method is taught most often in the hospital setting.
- Typically, classes offer couples up to two months of instruction.

