

Lesson One: *You Are In Control!*

“Whenever and however you give birth, your experience will impact your emotions, your mind, your body, and your spirit for the rest of your life.”

Ina May Gaskin

Welcome, and congratulations on your pregnancy and the upcoming birth of your baby! We are so happy you are a part of BrightBirth Academy Childbirth Education. We hope you will learn a lot about childbirth and become confident in your knowledge and ability to make good decisions for yourself and your baby during labor and delivery! As Ina May Gaskin, a famous midwife said, *“Giving birth is an emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual experience. Therefore, we want to help you have the most positive and best birth experience possible!”*

You probably wonder what you will learn in these seven sessions and precisely what you will learn today. We’re happy you asked!

In this lesson, you will learn:

1. An overview of the entire seven-lesson childbirth course;
2. Why it is essential to know your options regarding childbirth;
3. Why a positive childbirth experience is vital for both you and your baby; and
4. Some important things to consider and plan.

Let’s Get Started!

Begin watching the video.

The goal of the childbirth series:

1. Know your rights and options and have the authority to voice your choices and desires.
2. Learn the process of birth.
3. Understand the decisions and options you need to make to have the healthiest and most positive labor and delivery experience.

What you will learn in this BrightBirth Childbirth series:

Lesson One

1. Why it’s important to know your options
2. Why having a positive birth experience is essential for you and your baby

Lesson Two

1. How your body was designed to bring your baby into the world
2. The body parts and pieces that work together during labor
3. Why it's important to know how your body works

Lesson Three

1. About natural birth
2. Why it may be the best option for you

Lesson Four

1. How to make informed decisions during labor and birth
2. About informed consent and autonomy—your rights and freedom to make decisions on your own behalf

Lesson Five

1. To understand medical procedures
2. To understand interventions
3. About various medical pain relief options and how they affect you and your baby

Lesson Six

1. To create your birth plan
2. How to voice your desires and choices to your medical provider and birth team

Lesson Seven

1. About the postpartum experience (after the baby is born)
2. How to care for you and your baby after birth
3. How to settle into your new life with the baby at home

You have rights, options, and the authority to voice your choices and desires.

But to do this, you need to know the process of birth and the decisions and options you'll need to make to have the healthiest and most positive labor and delivery.

5. Do you know how many support people you are allowed in your birthing room? All facilities have their own rules.
6. What do you imagine it will be like holding your baby during those very first moments after birth? What do you hope it will be like?

Birth is not just a medical event.

Birth impacts you and your baby emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically. The goal is always a healthy baby and mom in the end, but that includes your emotional, mental, and spiritual health too. Your birth is about your goals, not someone else's.

Question

After watching the couples discuss the above questions in the video, have your answers changed? What did you learn from their interaction with Katie?

Conclusion

Support during and after birth is crucial. According to research, good support during childbirth leads to healthier birth outcomes and decreased rates of an unexpected Cesarean delivery (C-section). Find someone you trust to be there during pregnancy, labor, birth, and the postpartum period (after birth). You are under no obligation to include people in your labor and delivery room who do not make you feel loved, supported, and safe. Finally, invite your support person(s) to join you in these childbirth lessons. It will help them understand birth and how best to support you.

We are so happy that you've started this journey through the BrightBirth Childbirth course. In the next session, we will discuss how your body was designed to bring your baby from your womb into your arms, including:

1. The different parts of your reproductive system and how your body works in labor and delivery;
2. How to know if you're experiencing labor contractions or Braxton Hicks contractions, including their differences;
3. How to know if you are experiencing preterm labor, and if so, what to do;

1) Meghan A. Mohren; G Justus Hofmeyr; Carol Sakala; Rieko K. Fukuzawa; Anna Cuthbert; and Cochrane Pregnancy and Childbirth Group, Continuous Support for Women During Childbirth, Cochrane Library, July 2017, found at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6483123/>, accessed November 17, 2021.

4. The beginning signs of labor;
5. The different stages of labor; and
6. How your hormones affect labor and delivery.

Note: Make sure you complete your homework before the next lesson.

Healthcare and Support Information

Know Your Midwives

Midwife Levels

- Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM)
- Certified Midwife (CM)
- Certified Professional Midwife (CPM)
- Direct-Entry Midwife (DEM)

Certified Nurse-Midwife (CNM)

In the United States, certified nurse-midwives are nurses who have completed a graduate-level (master's or doctorate) nurse-midwife program and passed a certification exam from the American Midwifery Certification Board. They are qualified to provide a higher level of prenatal and postpartum (after birth) care and can prescribe a full range of tests, medications, and treatments. They are also able to deliver babies in the hospital. Currently, all states license CNMs for independent practice.

Certified Midwife (CN)

In the United States, certified midwives have completed the same graduate-level nurse-midwife program and board certification as the CNM, but they are not nurses. They give the same level of care the CNM does. Practice and licensing privileges for CNs vary by state.

Certified Professional Midwife (CPM)

In the United States, a certified professional midwife (CPM) has met the certification requirements of the North American Registry of Midwives (NARM). They can:

- Monitor women's prenatal through postnatal well-being;
- Refer you to an obstetrician if you need one;
- Give individualized education, counseling, prenatal care, assistance during labor and delivery, and support after birth; and
- Offer as few technological interventions as possible.

Practice privileges vary by state.

2) GraduateNursingEDU, "What is a Midwife?" <https://www.graduatnursingedu.org/careers/certified-nurse-midwife/what-is-a-midwife/>, accessed November 7, 2021.

3) NARM North American Registry of Midwives, "Life as a CPM," 2021, <http://narm.org/entry-level-applicants/>, accessed November 17, 2021.

Direct-Entry Midwife (DEM)

In the United States, direct-entry midwives are educated or trained without becoming nurses first. They may be CPMs or CMs. They specialize in home and free-standing birth center births. There is no national certification or licensing for direct-entry midwives, and each state has its own legal requirements for education and licensing for direct-entry midwives.

All Medicaid programs and most private insurance companies cover CNMs. Some Medicaid programs and most private insurances cover CMs, and only a few cover the other midwife levels.

To learn about midwifery laws and licensing in your state, go to **www.mana.org/about-midwives/state-by-state**.

Doula

Another level of birth support is a doula. A doula is a “trained professional who provides continuous physical, emotional, and informational support to a mother before, during, and shortly after childbirth to help her achieve the healthiest, most satisfying experience possible” (DONA INTERNATIONAL, WWW.DONA.ORG). She is also an advocate for the parents, helping them ask the right questions during childbirth, giving a voice to their preferences, and facilitating communication between the parents and healthcare providers. Unlike the midwife, they don’t provide clinical tasks, give medical advice, or deliver the baby. But they do provide continuous support in relaxation, ritual, and rhythm techniques, pain management techniques, labor and birth positions, encouragement, and more. In a recent study, the people who had continuous support from a doula (someone who was not a staff member at the hospital or part of the parents “social network”) experienced a 39 percent decrease in the risk of a cesarean and a 15 percent increase in the likelihood of a spontaneous vaginal birth. A doula will help you achieve your labor and delivery goals.

4) American College of Nurse-Midwives, “Comparison of Certified Nurse-Midwives, Certified Midwives, Certified Professional Midwives Clarifying the Distinctions Among Professional Midwifery Credentials in the U.S.,” October 2017, <https://www.midwife.org/acnm/files/cclibraryFiles/FILENAME/000000006807/FINAL-ComparisonChart-Oct2017.pdf>, accessed November 17, 2021.

5) Rebecca Dekker, PhD., RN, “Evidence on: Doulas,” March 27, 2013, updated May 4, 2019, Evidence-Based Birth, <https://evidencebasedbirth.com/the-evidence-for-doulas/>, accessed on December 10, 2021.

