

Birth Options

What is best for you?

by Dr Teo Shun Hui Wendy

LABOUR AND CHILDBIRTH can be both an exciting yet daunting feeling for most women especially first-time mothers. The joy and excitement of your baby arriving is often mixed with fear of labour itself. It is thus important for mothers to be aware of their options and what to expect during labour.

Hospital Birth versus Home Birth

The vast majority of mothers in Singapore will choose to have a hospital birth. I would advise couples to make a trip down to the maternity wards and delivery suite in your hospital of choice so as to familiarise yourself with the environment. You

must feel comfortable there. A very small but increasing number of couples will opt to have a home birth. Discuss with your healthcare provider first whether this is a viable option for you. The pregnancy has to be low risk with a back-up plan in place in case of emergency during labour.

Normal Delivery versus Caesarean Section

There are pros and cons to each procedure. Whilst most mothers would choose to have a normal delivery, some may decide on a caesarean section for medical reasons or fear of labour itself.

The advantages of a normal delivery include a shorter recovery period and less pain and scarring as compared to surgery. However, the possibility of a long labour and pain, prolapse of the womb or urinary incontinence in future may put off some mothers. Advocates of Caesarean section like the fact that it can be planned and is fairly quick and safe in this day and age. It avoids the risks of a long labour.

Normal Delivery Positions

Most women in Singapore deliver on the birthing bed lying on the back. This is quite a natural position for delivery and is safe even if one chooses to have epidural during the delivery. Others may choose to lie on the side, kneel or even go on all fours. Discuss your best option with your healthcare provider.

Some women may also opt to have a water birth in a birthing pool. If you have a relatively good pain threshold and believe that being in the water helps you relax and feel less stressed about labour, then you can consider this option. Check out the costs involved as this requires closer monitoring. The disadvantage are the risk of the baby inhaling the water during delivery, and infections.

Birth Plans

Every woman has different expectations of an ideal labour. I would always attempt to equip my patients with knowledge of what their options are in labour so that it will be a pleasant experience for them.

Here are some considerations.

Pain relief: Doula, gas, thigh injection, epidural

Syntocinon: This is a drug that is used to induce or speed up labour.

Foetal monitoring: Intermittent or continuous

Episiotomy or not: I generally do not advocate doing an episiotomy as a routine, but it is sometimes necessary.

Who cuts the cord: I like to give my patient's husband the option to cut the cord. However, there are some who are too scared and prefer not to do it!

Keeping an Open Mind

Allowing for skin to skin contact between mummy and baby as soon as baby is delivered to encourage bonding is very important.

It is important for you to communicate with your obstetrician about your fears and expectations of what an ideal labour is for you, and go with someone you trust. Keep an open mind. Sometimes, the labour may not go as planned, but trust that your obstetrician will guide you in making the best choice. Enjoy your labour process! *eh*

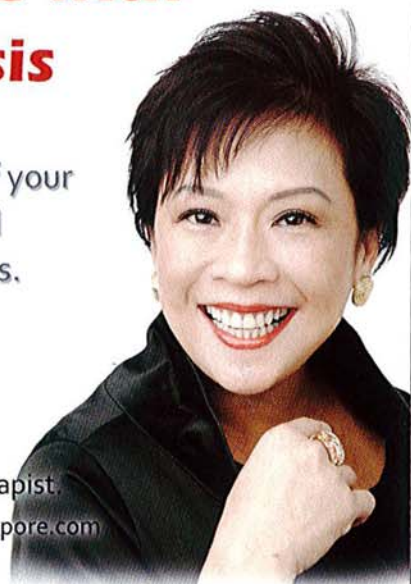


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