



The birth of a child is such a special event and we are delighted that you have chosen Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center to play a role in that experience. Because each birth is as unique as the family involved, we are committed to making every effort to accommodate your family's needs and wishes.

We have prepared this brochure and the other materials you will receive in this packet to help you and your family prepare for your baby's birth. Please ask your obstetrical provider any questions you may have about this information or about anything else that concerns you. We want to make sure that the childbirth experience is as healthy and happy as possible for you, your baby, and your family.

As your baby's birth gets closer, there is a lot to do! Here are some things you will want to take care of in the weeks before your baby arrives.

Parent education classes

Part of getting ready to have a baby is learning as much as you can about pregnancy and the birth process. Parent education classes can help. Information on available options can be found at www.bidmc.org/childbirth.

Choose and meet with a pediatric provider

You will need to take your baby for a visit to a pediatric provider within a few days after discharge from the hospital. Therefore, it's important to choose someone well before you give birth. If you don't have someone in mind, your obstetrical provider may have a recommendation. (Your baby will see a pediatrician while still in the hospital. If the pediatric provider you choose does not have privileges at BIDMC, your obstetrical provider will arrange for a staff pediatrician to care for your baby in the hospital.)

Many parents find it helpful to meet with one or more pediatric providers before the baby is born. An introductory meeting can help you make sure you are choosing someone you will be comfortable working with as your baby grows. Meeting with a pediatric provider also gives you a chance to discuss the benefits of breastfeeding, vaccinations your baby will need, and whether or not to circumcise if your baby is a boy.

Other things to consider include:

Training and credentials: Is the pediatrician certified by the American Board of Pediatrics? Where did he or she receive training? You might find it especially helpful to ask family and friends in your community for recommendations and information about first-hand experiences.

Coverage: Where will your baby be seen if illness arises during non-office hours? Who covers for your provider when he/she is not available? If your baby ever needs admission to a hospital, where will he or she go?

Accessibility: How does the office handle parent phone calls? Is telephone advice available? How quickly can your baby be seen if an illness develops? What are the office hours?

Convenience: Will travel to the office be an issue? Remember, your visits to the pediatric office will be frequent in the first years of your baby's life.

Pain control during labor and delivery

The obstetrical anesthesia department at BIDMC offers information sessions on pain control during labor and delivery. Call (617) 667-3353 to learn more.

Decide on a feeding method

You'll need to decide how you will feed your baby.

👉 The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all babies receive only breast milk for at least the first six months of life, and then breast milk in combination with solid foods until at least 12 months of age.

👉 Breast milk is more easily digested than formula, it contains a balance of nutrients that is ideal for your baby, and it contains antibodies and special cells that help protect your baby from infections. Breastfeeding may help protect your baby from health problems later in life, including obesity, heart disease,

allergies, and some types of cancer. Health benefits for the mother from breastfeeding have also been shown, including a lower risk of breast cancer and ovarian cancer; a lower risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, and obesity; improved bone density; and possibly a faster return to pre-pregnancy weight.

👉 Many of the organizations that offer childbirth classes also offer classes or additional information on breastfeeding. Ask for more information when you register for childbirth classes.

👉 You can continue to provide breast milk for your baby after you return to work. Many resources are available to support breastfeeding women who will be returning to work. More information is available from your obstetrical provider, a lactation consultant at BIDMC (617-667-5765), or from the La Leche League (800-525-3243). Additional information is available online at www.womenshealth.gov or from the Massachusetts Breastfeeding Coalition at www.massbfc.org.

👉 If you decide that breastfeeding is not the best choice for you, most pediatricians will recommend you use a formula based on cow's milk protein with added iron. There are many brands to choose from. Content and nutritional value are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, so all common brands are very much alike. You do not necessarily have to use the brand of formula your baby receives in the hospital.

👉 For some formula-fed babies, special formulas are needed. This may be because of allergies or other concerns. If you have a strong family history of allergies, or if you have other questions about formula, please speak to your pediatric provider.

Infant car seat

Don't forget to get an infant car seat for your baby and learn how to use it correctly before you go to the hospital. You should do the following things before your delivery:

- Take the car seat out of the box and become familiar with the straps, buckles, and adjustment mechanisms.
- Practice installing the seat in your car to be sure you know how to do it. You may want to have your installed seat inspected to be sure it is installed correctly. You can find a certified child passenger safety seat technician in your area by going to www.seatcheck.org or by calling 1-866-SEAT-CHECK (1-866-732-8243). Many car seats come with a base and this should be securely installed before you head to the hospital.

Remember, it is both illegal and unsafe for your baby to travel in a car without being securely and safely restrained in a properly-installed car seat.

Please note: The seat you choose for your baby should be an infant car seat. The seat must be less than 6 years old, have all of the necessary pieces including a chest clip for the shoulder straps and the operator's manual. Additional car seat features for small infants include shoulder straps that are 7 inches from the base in their lowest position and a crotch strap that is about 3½ inches from the back in its closest position. If your baby is small or premature, he or she may be monitored in the car seat before you leave the hospital. Some babies need to travel in a car bed due to their size or medical condition. The hospital staff will help you should your baby need extra assistance to travel.

For additional guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, please visit www.healthychildren.org.

Make arrangements for your hospital stay

👉 Be sure you know how to reach your obstetrical provider when you go into labor. (More information on signs of labor is included in this packet.)

👉 Talk with your family about the support person(s) you've chosen for your labor and birth. This is an important choice for you and an honor for those you select. Make sure those you select are willing and able to be there with you, and inform other family members or friends how they may visit you once the baby is born and you are in your postpartum room. Those supporting you will receive a badge that allows them to be with you in labor and delivery.

Pack for the hospital

When you are in labor, you'll want to be ready to leave for the hospital. It's best if you pack a small bag for labor and delivery, and another bag that can be brought to you when you are in your postpartum room.

For labor and delivery

- camera/video recorder
- phone numbers of people you'll call after the baby is born
- a few snacks
- a few toiletries, such as lip balm
- other items you or your support person plan to use in labor

For your postpartum room

Leave these in the car and have someone bring them to you later.

- nightgowns with an opening in front for breastfeeding
- robe and slippers
- nursing bra
- loose clothes for your trip home (Remember, your body will not be at its pre-pregnancy size for a while.)
- clothes for the baby to wear home: at least a t-shirt and blanket, as well as other clothes appropriate for the weather

👉 Make sure your obstetrical provider knows your wishes about labor and birth. Ask any questions you may have. Ask about signing a Massachusetts Health Care Proxy form. This is a step we recommend for all BIDMC patients. It tells your doctor who has the authority to speak on your behalf regarding your health care if you ever become unable to speak for yourself.

👉 Talk with your obstetrical provider about options for pain control during labor and delivery. It is a good idea to have an understanding of the risks and benefits of each type of pain control before you go into labor, whether or not you plan to use them. You may decide ahead of time on a plan for managing your pain, but during labor you may want to change your mind. In this case, it's best if you have learned as much as you can about your options so you will be able to make an informed decision.

👉 It is important to plan how you will get to the hospital. If you have other children, make arrangements for someone to care for them when you go into labor or need to come to the hospital. Make these plans well in advance as most babies are not born on their due dates and many come early.

👉 You will also need to plan how you will get home from the hospital. Please be sure you have an infant car seat installed correctly in the car the baby will travel in.

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Find out about insurance coverage

- ☞ Check with your insurance company regarding coverage for both you and your baby. Typically, insurance pays for two nights in the hospital if you deliver vaginally and four nights if you have a cesarean birth.
- ☞ Ask if your insurance plan covers a home visit by a visiting nurse. Find out if this is available for everyone, or only for mothers who choose to leave the hospital early.
- ☞ Make sure you know how to add your baby to your family health insurance plan.
- ☞ If you do not have health insurance or another way to cover your hospital bill, please call our financial assistance office at (617) 667-5661. Someone will be happy to help you.

Plan your return to work

- ☞ If you will be returning to work after your baby's birth, be sure to begin your search for child care early. You will want to have enough time to find someone you are comfortable with. Many resources are available to help you in your search. A good place to start is by dialing 2-1-1 to reach "Mass 2-1-1," which provides free information on health and human services resources in the state.
- ☞ Find out about any maternity leave or disability insurance you may be entitled to through your employer.
- ☞ Begin to explore ways you can continue breastfeeding after you return to work. There are many resources available in print and online that can help. Talk with your employer about a private area where you can pump your milk while you are at work.