

Pacific Midwifery Top Tips for a Gentle Birth



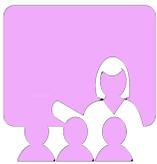
Birth is instinctual. Reduce fear surrounding birth by immersing yourself in positive birth stories, photography, and videos. Read books that are less about facts and more about what your body and mind are capable of - i.e. *Birth from Within*, *Gentle Birth Gentle Mothering*, or *Ina May's Guide to Childbirth*. For some, it is helpful to reflect on our past experiences and beliefs with a counsellor to bring about emotional and spiritual freedom for birthing.

Nourishing your body during pregnancy helps prevent gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, and pre-eclampsia, which ultimately leads to healthier births. **Keep your blood sugars balanced** by eating a protein, good-quality fat, and a *healthy* carbohydrate (i.e. whole grain) at every meal, and plenty of green vegetables daily. Good quality protein snacks are encouraged – your placenta loves protein! Avoid white flour products, excessive starchy foods, as well as juice, soda, or other sweetened drinks.



Freedom of movement is essential to birthing instinctually; so that you have greater ability to stretch, squat, and optimize your baby's position in the pelvis. **'When we stretch our bodies, we are also stretching our internal beliefs and feelings, because our bodies and our minds are inseparable'** – Sarah Buckley, MD. Regular exercise with stretching may reduce common pregnancy discomforts and shorten labour. Many people benefit from regular chiropractic adjustments or massage therapy to provide additional symmetry and movement to the pelvis, and deep relaxation to the muscles.

Find a midwife or team of midwives who will provide continuity of care throughout pregnancy, birth and postpartum – with a central belief that birth is normal and have experience with undisturbed birth; who will remind you that **your body already knows how to give birth**; who will guard your birthing environment. Did you know that the cesarean rate with midwives as your primary care provider is 17%, compared to the BC's average of 35%?



Knowledge is power, and birth is power. Childbirth education classes can help prepare you and your partner's heart and mind for birthing your baby. There are many programs that provide information on evidence-based care, creating a safe birth environment, connecting with your partner, coping with labour, healing from birth, and caring for your baby. Parents who attend classes **have increased confidence in their ability to birth**.

Doulas are a rich addition to your support team. Your emotional and physical well-being are their top priorities. They are a host of knowledge for ways to cope throughout the various stages of birth and will advocate for you in every circumstance. With a doula, research shows that you **decrease your chance of c-section**, use of medications for pain relief, length of labour, and low Apgar scores. With doulas, women report greater satisfaction with their birth experience.



Waterbirth or immersion during labour has significant benefits to birthing. It allows for relaxation, control, privacy, and undisturbed birth. **The environment is similar to that of the womb**, making the transition earth-side a calm experience for babies. Waterbirth has been shown to reduce perineal tears, pain, and postpartum hemorrhage. If you are planning a homebirth, having a tub or birth pool available is a valuable space to retreat.

The atmosphere that created the baby is what is most favorable for bringing baby out – familiarity, privacy, comfort, control, freedom to surrender, love. Homebirth is a safe option for those with normal pregnancies and all midwives are trained to provide expert care at home. Canadian-based research shows the same number of babies are born healthy regardless of where the birth took place. At home, you have a greater chance of a vaginal birth, less use of interventions, and decreased chance of infection and hemorrhage.



You are the best decision maker for yourself and your baby – whatever your pregnancy, birth, and parenting choices are.