

My Guide | People to Meet During Pregnancy

Many women find out they're pregnant and don't know where to start their journey of becoming a mother. The first step, if you don't already have a medical provider, is to call a birthing hospital in your area. Ask to speak with the Nurse Manager of Obstetrics (or just say "O-B" and they'll connect you). This nurse can help you find a prenatal care provider (a doctor or a midwife) who will meet with you while you are pregnant. This person can help you set up meetings with the other hospital workers who will help during your pregnancy and delivery of your child. We have made a list of people you should meet while you are pregnant. There may be other people who we don't list here, but at least find out who these people are and what they do. That will be a great start to having a healthy pregnancy and delivery.

OBSTETRICIAN (OB) OR MIDWIFE *(or whoever will be delivering your baby)*

- Ask about birth classes in your area.
- Ask what delivery will be like. Ask about your options for delivery, and make sure they know what kind of delivery you want to have.
- Ask what will happen right after birth, and for information about delivery (for example, who can be in the birthing room with you, or whether you can room-in with your baby after delivery).

ANESTHESIOLOGIST *(pain management specialist)*

- Talk to this person about the medications you are taking, the type of pain relief you want during labor, and what medications you feel safe taking home with you after delivery.
- You might have to explain your experience with substance use or addiction. If you feel like you're not getting the information or care that you need, tell your OB or ask to see someone else.

LACTATION SPECIALIST *(breastfeeding)*

- This person can help during pregnancy as you are making decisions about whether you want to try breastfeeding. Make sure they know which drugs and medications you are taking.
- Schedule another appointment with this person for the time right after you deliver, so that you have support when you are trying to breastfeed.
- Ask this person for help getting breastfeeding supplies, like a breast pump or nipple guards. These things should be available through your health insurance plan.

NEONATOLOGIST/ PEDIATRICIAN (baby doctor)

- This person can explain what happens after a baby is born, how long the baby might be kept in the hospital after birth, and what sorts of things to be on the lookout for, in case the baby experiences symptoms of substance withdrawal.
- Ask for a tour of the mother/baby rooms, or the nursery, or any other place where your baby may stay after birth. It's a good idea to start getting to know the nurses who work there. They will become your teammates pretty soon.
- Ask what the visiting hours and policies are, in case your baby does stay at the hospital longer than you do. Ask if food, a bed, or transportation is offered for parents who want to stay with their babies.

HOSPITAL SOCIAL WORKER

Ask this person about custody: what is the process, and how you can be included, and be prepared. Also ask about discharge planning, and how to get in touch with important resources like Home Visiting, Visiting Nurses, and Early Intervention. (More information on these resources is in *Journey Milestone 4: The Early Days*.)

- Ask this person for help enrolling in the *Women, Infants, and Children (or WIC)* program, if you aren't already enrolled. WIC can connect you to a breastfeeding peer counselor, help you get a breast pump, and provide you with education, support, and supplemental food and formula.
- When delivery day comes, make sure that you give this person a copy of your **Birth Planning Checklist**, or your Plan of Safe Care. (Look for the **Birth Planning Checklist** and **Birth Planning Kit** on the Journey resources page at <https://journeyrecoveryproject.com/resources/#tip-sheets>.)

It's especially important, when you're meeting with the doctors or professionals at the hospital, to remember that you all want the same thing: a safe delivery and a healthy baby! You don't have any reason to feel guilty or ashamed. It doesn't matter what substances your baby was exposed to while you were pregnant, what matters now is that you team up with your providers and the hospital staff to help your baby enter the world safe and healthy.

OTHER WAYS TO PREPARE FOR BABY:

CHILDCARE

If you have other children at home, who will take care of them while you are in the hospital?

TRANSPORTATION

How will you get to the hospital for prenatal appointments and for delivery? If your baby stays in the hospital past the time you are discharged, how will you get to and from the hospital to visit? When it is time to take your baby home, who will pick you up? Do you have a car seat that is properly installed to pick baby up?

HOUSING

Where will you and baby live? Do you have a safe and sober home to bring baby to? Is there a space in your home for your baby to sleep safely in their own crib with no blankets or toys inside? If you need help finding housing or help getting into residential treatment, you can call the treatment access line at 1-866-705-2807 or find a Family Resource Center in your area by visiting <https://www.frcma.org/locations>.

MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER

Do you have a counselor or therapist you trust? If not, it's a great idea to connect with one. This person can listen to you and support you through your pregnancy and parenting journey.

BIRTH COACH

Do you have someone who will go to the hospital with you and support you while you give birth? Do they know what you want for your delivery? Do they know how to support your recovery, as well as your journey into motherhood?

PEDIATRICIAN

Do you know which doctor you want your baby to see once they are discharged from the hospital? Babies should be checked by a pediatrician (or child doctor) just a few days after they leave the hospital, even if they're doing great! It's best to contact a pediatrician before your baby is born to make sure that they are accepting new patients and can see you and your baby after delivery. Some pediatricians can also meet with you during your pregnancy, if you would like more information about your baby's health and development.

OTHER SUPPORTS

Can you connect with a Recovery Coach, a Peer Care Coordinator, or a Community Support Worker? These people are often other mothers with similar experiences, who can walk you through this process, offer support, and help you get to your appointments. Call an outpatient substance use treatment program in your area to see if these supports are available. You can also call your health insurance provider to find a peer support specialist.