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*What exactly should I expect when I arrive in labor at the hospital?*

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Arriving at the hospital can look a little different depending on the time of day and how far along you actually are but I can give you some general information based on the process at our hospital, Marian Regional Medical Center. We can also go over more information based on your birth plan and preferences in person but again, this is a general overview based on our hospitals policies. The hospital requests that all parents pre-register online so that your medical file is already created prior to your arrival. This file will contain your personal information, emergency information, and health insurance. When we start loading up to drive to the hospital I will call and let the Hospital Labor & Delivery floor know we are on our way. Once we arrive, a nurse will take you and your partner to triage. It is likely a nurse will want to give you an exam. It is up to you if you would like to have a cervical exam or not.

They will then admit you to a delivery room if you're in active labor or may send you back home if they determine you are not yet dilated enough. Once you have a delivery room, due to the hospitals current COVID policies, you will be required to stay in your room; however, you can still move freely inside of your suite and bathroom space in your room. While inside your room your partner will assist you through contractions. You and/or your partner can dim the lights, play music, and use the shower and bathtub for laboring. You may also ask your nurse to assist with manipulating the bed so that you can comfortably get into squatting positions, all fours, or use the squat bar for assistance too. Thanks to recent changes in the hospitals COVID policies, I am currently allowed to enter the hospital with you. If there should be any changes to remove these rights I can be available via Facetime, phone calls, and text messaging. Please do not hesitate to connect with me; I want to support you as much as I can, especially when during a pandemic.

As your contractions grow longer, stronger, and closer together you may choose to alert the nurses to the changes you're feeling. If you and your partner feel like you need additional in-person support you may request that the nurse stay with you when possible. While this isn't always available it is great to ask for the support if you need it. Again, I am also available to support you by phone if you would like. When you feel the urge to push you again may choose to call for the nurses and doctor. Otherwise you could call for the nurses or doctor after the urge passes. Some physicians and nursing staff prefer to use directed pushing while a woman lies on her back to deliver. If that is not how you would like to birth, it is perfectly acceptable that you share your wishes with your hospital staff upon arrival with your birth plan or verbally when the time comes. Once the baby is born, you should have the first hour to connect with the baby through skin-to-skin time and while establishing your first breastfeeding latch; this is called the golden hour. After you have delivered the placenta your hospital staff will suture any tears, if necessary, and begin to massage the uterus. The uterus massage is typically a bit uncomfortable but is important to help the uterus to contract and begin shrinking. Within 24-48 hours of giving birth the hospital staff will discharge you and send you home to continue recovering.

If, at any point it is determined you will need a cesarean and you consent to a cesarean, your nurse will take you into the operating room. You will be greeted by the Anesthesiologist in the operating room, they will discuss with you how the medications work for numbing your torso and lower extremities. After being given the medications your partner and/or I will join you in the operating room

with the nurses and obstetrician. The nurses and doctor will lie you down on the operating table and begin your abdominal surgery/cesarean. You can request that the doctor and nurses talk you through the procedure. You can also request a clear drape, to assist in pulling baby out of the incision site, immediate skin-to-skin, delayed cord clamping, and to stay together while your placenta is delivered and you are sutured. While this isn't always a viable option it is important you ask your team for these options, if any of these things are of interest to you. Once your incision is sutured, you and baby will be taken to a separate recovery room. After you have been monitored for 3-6 hours you and baby will go to your final recovery room which is where you will stay for the remainder of your visit. Typically, with cesarean deliveries our hospital will keep birthing parents for 48-96 hours.

After your delivery is complete, you've had your golden hour with the baby, and the baby has latched, the hospital staff should assess the baby's weight, head, and chest circumference. Permitted everything is safe with you, baby, and partner you will all be tucked in for the night. Nurses will come in to check vitals periodically throughout the night and early morning but you can request that they delay checks if you are not showing any concerning vitals. Our local hospital does not use a nursery so baby will stay in the room with you and your partner at all times.

At home, you should remain in bed, on the couch, or in a comfortable relaxing area as often as possible for the first 5-14 days. This will help facilitate your recovery, establish breastfeeding, and allow the baby to acclimate to life outside of the womb. Each birthing person, baby, labor, and delivery are all so very different. It is important to remember after delivering the placenta a birthing person will have a dinner-plate-sized wound in the uterus where the placenta was originally attached. I highly recommend you take your recovery slow and are intentional in all that you try and do, especially in the early postpartum period. Our hospital typically sends an in-home nurse visit within the first week of delivery. I will also be available to assist you at your postpartum visit, typically I like this to be within the first 5 days if you need assistance for recovery, home-tasks, or breastfeeding assistance. If all is well, we can do the first postpartum visit within 10 days postpartum.

I hope this helps give you some general ideas of what to expect from checking into the hospital through discharge from the hospital. If you have any questions please feel free to email me or give me a call to review.

Written by Alexandra Klein, Certified Doula with International Doula Institute, 09/2020