

Choosing a Doctor or Midwife

So many women choose their obstetrician (or OB) almost by default. They just aren't sure who else to go to or what to look for. Your maternity care provider, whether a doctor or midwife, will have a profound impact on your birth. Providers vary in how much time they spend with you during labor, what comfort measures they provide, and on their approach to using interventions. They are also a key person helping you navigate this year of incredible change, both before and after you have your baby. 50% of women experience a new health concern during the childbearing year and many more have pregnancy surprises and discomforts. This is a relationship that may become very significant for you in the coming months. Seek out a provider that will nurture and inspire you in addition to providing you with competent care.

Some of these questions are part of this planning guide just to be sure that you and your partner are aware of the knowledge you should have before choosing a care provider. Others help you consider factors unique to you. As you gather enough knowledge to answer these questions, you will be well on your way to finding a wonderful care provider for your birth.

Understanding Your Options

1. What is the difference between a "regular" doctor, an obstetrician, and a midwife? What are the benefits of choosing one provider type over another? Read [What is an OB? What is a midwife?](http://www.marasworld.com/what-is-an-ob-what-is-a-midwife/) (www.marasworld.com/what-is-an-ob-what-is-a-midwife/) for a comprehensive explanation.

2. What health conditions mandate care from an obstetrician?

3. How do midwifery care and obstetrical care differ? How are they the same?

4. Given the answers to questions 1-3, which provider type is most likely the best fit for our family?

Finding the Best Person for Our Family

5. What qualities of the provider type we chose in #4 are most important to us?

6. Not all midwives practice like midwives and not all OBs practice like OBs. Many family doctors lie somewhere in the middle. How could we determine, during an interview with a specific prospective provider, whether or not they exemplify the qualities we listed in #5?

7. Who do we know who has knowledge about local doctors and midwives who might understand the values we listed in #5? Where else could we get some leads for provider names that would be a good fit? (Consider local parenting groups, breastfeeding groups, doulas, and childbirth educators.)

8. Now that we have a few names in mind, how can we learn more about each person? For each person determine if they provide interviews and if we are able to talk to previous clients.

Questions for the Care Provider

Provider interviews may be short or long depending on the practice. Gather information made available on their web site or through a staff nurse ahead of time. Choose the most important questions from the list below to ask during an interview.

Date: _____

Care Provider: _____

What is a typical prenatal visit like?

What can we expect from your care during the birth?

What is the routine postpartum follow up for a healthy and normal birth?

What is your experience with my birth preference (epidural, natural, water birth, VBAC, homebirth)? How many of your clients plan for, and have, births like this?

What is your experience with cultural, philosophical, or religious considerations like ours (e.g. immediate infant baptism, refusal of standard baby medications, or anything you are requesting that is a divergence from standard care)? Are you able to accommodate or support our unique needs?

What are the routine procedures that will be part of my care during birth? (What type of fetal monitoring, diet restrictions, IV policies, labor support provision, etc.?)

How many of your patients have C-sections or assisted vaginal births (vacuum or forceps)?

What is your recommendation for when to induce for post dates (overdue)? Are there other reasons you would recommend an induction?

Why did you choose this profession? What do you like about your job?

Where did you get your training? What are some of your professional accomplishments and areas of interest?

Do you take our insurance? What fees can we expect?

Questions for Reflection After a Provider Interview

Did their answers reassure us or cause us to feel wary?

Were they defensive or open in their reflections?

Did they provide evidence that was useful and helped us understand their answers, or did they find it difficult or unnecessary to back up the way they practice with reasoning?

Did we feel at ease, listened to, and excited by the prospect of working with them?

If we have only minor concerns about this provider are there alternative ways we can meet our needs, such as hiring a doula?