YOUR CHILDBIRTH EXPERIENCE
A guide for pregnancy, birth and parenting

Introduction
The purpose of this book is to help you understand pregnancy, the process of labor and birth, newborn care and breastfeeding. The more knowledge you have of the process of birth, the more likely you will approach your personal journey with confidence.

Special thanks to the many people all over the country who helped with suggestions, advice and support. Without their expertise and guidance, this publication could not have been produced in an accurate and complete way.

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Prenatal Care Is Important
Take care of yourself now so that you and your baby will stay healthy. During prenatal care visits (doctor or nurse visits while you are pregnant), your health care team will talk with you about what you can do to help your baby get a healthy start in life. Go to all appointments with your doctor or nurse.

Choosing a Provider
Health care providers who care for pregnant patients include:

- Obstetrician – a doctor who takes care of patients during pregnancy and birth.
- Family Medicine Doctor – a doctor for people of any age. They also take care of patients during pregnancy and birth.
- Nurse Practitioner – a nurse with extra training. They can do checkups and give medicine.
- Certified Nurse Midwife – a nurse with training in pregnancy and childbirth. They can give prenatal care and attend the birth.
- Physician Assistant – has trained with doctors and can do checkups, give medicine and order lab tests.

What Happens at Office Visits?
It is important to know how healthy you are to take the best care of you and your baby. The first office visit may take longer than all other visits. This is so your health care provider can do some exams and tests.

Follow-up visits are shorter. Your health care provider will look to see if you and your baby are having any health problems. The growth of your baby will also be checked. Blood tests or ultrasounds will be done at some visits.

What Happens During the First Visit?
Your health care provider will:

- Ask you many questions about your health history.
- Give you a physical exam and a pelvic exam.
- Order the lab tests listed below.
- Do all the things listed under Follow-Up Visits on the next page.

Lab tests:

- Complete blood count
- Urine test
- Syphilis (sexually transmitted infection) test
- Rubella (German Measles) check
- Blood type, Rh factor and antibody check
- Cervical and vaginal cultures (if needed)

- Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C check
- Urine culture (if needed)
- HIV testing (if you agree)
- Screening for cervical cancer (if needed)
- Cystic fibrosis carrier screening (if needed)