

## Childbirth Education Classes

Labour is one of the most precious and memorable days in a lifetime and enormous preparation and planning should go into it.

Childbirth education classes should be geared not only to the pregnant mom, but her partner as well. The intricacies of pregnancy and labour can be learnt together – stimulating discussion between you as a couple, helping you to work through problem areas and finding better solutions to make this life long journey of parenting the exciting path in life that it should be.

The philosophy that should be taught at classes – is one of “informed choice through the knowledge of alternatives” – in other words the teaching should cover the pros and cons of all your options for the birthing process, and once you have heard and understood all the different methods available to you – you then have the knowledge to make your decisions.

The classes are a place where long term friends are made, where you can compare labour methods, and encourage each other in the trying times of early parenting, swapping tried and tested tips on every available subject.

So what exactly do you learn at these classes? Typically the course is a 6 week course – held one evening a week.

General topics covered at most classes include

- Changes during pregnancy
- Physical discomforts
- What happens in labour
- Self help techniques for coping with labour – breathing, water, massage, relaxation, visualisation
- Pain relief options – pethidine, entonox, epidurals
- Partner's role
- Birth plan
- Inductions, caesars
- Forceps / vacuum deliveries
- Pushing techniques
- Episiotomies
- 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of labour
- 4<sup>th</sup> stage – magical hour
- Skin to skin at birth
- Initiating breastfeeding
- Supporting breastfeeding
- Complications of breastfeeding
- Expressing
- Immediate care of the newborn
- Apgar scoring
- Practical baby care
- Postnatal depression

Classes give the dads an enormous amount of insight about what has been happening over the past few months and what to expect going forward. One of the most practical and beneficial evenings is learning coping skills – skills for coping with the pain of labour but equally so, the ways to cope with the everyday stresses of life.

The most important factor is to come out of labour and be able to say, “That was a fantastic birthing experience.”

The classes combine information and skills that are valuable for childbirth and life in general.

## Choosing your childbirth educator

### Make informed decisions when choosing your childbirth educator

There should be no doubt in your mind that to attend childbirth education classes, is essential. Now let's ensure that you choose the correct classes for you. Since expectant parents have different needs, choosing a childbirth education program that suits your needs is what is important.

Childbirth educators are important sources of information, skills and support for parents in today's technological world.

The childbirth educator acts as:

- A teacher who provides
  - Information about the physiology, psychology and sociology of pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum (the 6 weeks after you have had your baby), and early parenthood
  - Skills to assist women and their support persons to cope with pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum and early parenthood.
- A facilitator who helps pregnant couples better understand and value their experience of the transition to parenthood
- A communication link between the pregnant woman and other members of the health care circle
- An advocate for pregnant women, their partners, infants and new families

### The philosophy of the childbirth educator should be freedom of choice based on the knowledge of alternatives.

Some important questions to ask the educator are:

- What are her qualifications?
- Does she attend regular Childbirth Educator Professional Forum educational updates?
- Is she a mother herself?
- What are her ideals of labour – do they match your ideals and expectations (desires) for your labour?
- Do partners attend all the classes or only a select few?
- Are there practical sessions on breathing, positions for labour, massage, relaxation and visualisation?
- Which birthing methods are included in her course?
- Which birthing method does she put her emphasis on during her teaching? – It is very important that her emphasis should be the birth you are striving for, but she should cover all birthing options
- Length of course
- Cost of course

The childbirth educator – a person you cannot possibly be without during your pregnancy – make sure you find your childbirth educator today – what a benefit she will be to you! To find the childbirth educators in your area consult the latest Expectant Mothers Guide or [www.expectantmothersguide.co.za](http://www.expectantmothersguide.co.za)



# Childbirth Education ...

... makes a difference



## ENSURE YOU MAKE INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT YOUR PREGNANCY, BIRTH AND PARENTING – KNOW YOUR OPTIONS

### Research conducted within the private maternity sector in South Africa showed the following

- Only 10% of pregnant moms researched their options about birth
- 67% had a caesarean section (the acceptable rate should be 18%)
- 3,4% of births were accompanied by a doula
- 19% were induced
- 30% drank during labour although most of those only sucked ice
- 14% ate during labour although mostly just sucked sweets
- epidural is the preferred method for pain relief although midwives patients still opted for self-help techniques and pethidine
- 33% had vaginal births
- 28% delivered intact, 42% had a tear and 30% had an episiotomy. Research shows that the gynae / midwife's hands should be off the perineum and allow a mother to deliver intact or with a tear
- Most women birthed in a semi-reclined back-lying position and pushed as instructed by the caregiver and not pushed as their body told them to
- 51% had skin-to-skin contact with their babies at birth
- 44% breastfed their babies in the first hour after birth
- 68% had their babies rooming-in with them in the ward after birth

Do you want your birth to be just another statistic or are you going to research your options? – One of the best ways is to attend childbirth education classes and read up on your birthing choices in the Expectant Mothers Guide or [www.expectantmothersguide.co.za](http://www.expectantmothersguide.co.za) or download the Expectant Mothers Guide App



### Childbirth education trends in the private sector in SA research shows

- Pregnant moms and dads motivation for attending childbirth education (antenatal) classes is to prepare for birth and parenting, gain knowledge, be able to make informed choices about birth and parenting, set up a support structure
- The classes met 87% of the attendees needs
- 85% were taught research based information at the classes
- 95% felt the childbirth educator instilled confidence in them
- 92% will recommend the classes to their friends and colleagues
- They felt they benefitted from the classes by
  - Becoming more confident
  - Learning their options for birthing
  - Knowing what to expect
  - Felt more equipped for birth
  - Better prepared for the birthing process
  - Realistic expectations for birth
  - Empowered and supported
  - Could make birthing decisions
  - Emotionally prepared
- Moms found their childbirth educator
  - Passionate about birth
  - Knowledgeable
  - Approachable
  - Enthusiastic
  - Practical and helpful



### Thoughts on birth

- Birth is normal, natural and healthy
- Women are made to birth
- The experience of birth profoundly affects women and their families
- Create good birthing experiences, the memories are with you forever
- Women's inner wisdom guides them through birth
- Women's confidence and ability to give birth are either enhanced or diminished by the care provider and place of birth so choose them carefully
- Women have a right to give birth free from routine medical interventions
- Birth can safely take place in birthing units and homes
- Childbirth education empowers women to make informed choices in health care, to assume responsibility for their health and to trust their inner wisdom
- Enjoy the privilege of giving birth

