

Childbirth



We thank the Czech organisation SPMP ČR - Inclusion Czech Republic for their support.
This booklet was made according to the Czech version which was developed by SPMP ČR and illustrated by Helena Neubertova, Prooko.
The booklet is available at: www.spmPCR.cz and www.uzvim.org.



Published by: Sožitje Association

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Design: Kalipso d.o.o.

Available free of charge www.zveza-sozitje.si/Childbirth

1st digital edition, 2019

Kataložni zapis o publikaciji (CIP) pripravili v Narodni in univerzitetni knjižnici v Ljubljani

COBISS.SI-ID=301561088

ISBN 978-961-6828-17-8 (pdf)



Childbirth

This booklet will teach you:

- What is childbirth
- What can a pregnant woman do during childbirth
- How does a pregnant woman know that childbirth has started
- What can a pregnant woman expect to happen at the maternity ward
- What happens during childbirth
- What happens after childbirth
- What is the post-natal period
- How to take care of the baby

Pregnancy ends with childbirth

Pregnancy is when a baby is growing inside a woman's body. A woman can get pregnant if she has sexual intercourse with a man. This means that the man inserts his aroused penis in her vagina. At the end of sexual intercourse the man ejects sperm into the woman's vagina. In the uterus inside the woman's body, the male sperm unites with the egg. This is how the **embryo** of the baby is made.

The pregnancy lasts for 9 months. After 9 months in the mother's belly, the baby is big enough to be born. The baby comes out of its mother's body. We say that the woman gives birth. We call this event **childbirth**. The woman pushes the baby out of her belly through her vagina. The duration of childbirth varies from woman to woman. Usually, childbirth lasts a few hours. Sometimes it lasts longer.



How can a pregnant woman prepare for childbirth

A pregnant woman is also called an **expectant mother**. A pregnant woman goes to the gynaecologist regularly. The gynaecologist examines her to see if everything is alright with her and the baby. The gynaecologist determines when the woman will give birth. This is the expected date of childbirth. The baby will be born around this date. As the date of childbirth approaches, the pregnant woman sometimes becomes scared. For example she is afraid that childbirth will be painful.

A pregnant woman can prepare for childbirth. She can visit exercise classes for pregnant women. She can learn various exercises there. Before childbirth, a pregnant woman can visit special classes. There she learns how childbirth takes place. She also learns how to breathe and push during childbirth. She can also ask women who have already given birth about childbirth.



What can a pregnant woman take care of before childbirth

Some women live with their partners but are not married to them. They are expecting a baby with their partners.

They wish that their partner would recognise the child.

The partner has to be declared as the child's father in the **birth certificate**.

This has to be done before the expected date of childbirth.

The pregnant woman and her partner go to the administrative unit together.

There, they file a request for the partner to be declared in the birth certificate.

Some couples want the baby to have its father's surname.

This too, has to be done before the expected date of childbirth.

If the pregnant woman is not sure about this, she can talk about it with somebody.

Her doctor or someone close to her, for example her mother or assistant, can help her.



What should a pregnant woman prepare before childbirth

The pregnant woman must pack her hospital bag. She must have her bag ready one month before the expected date of childbirth.

She should pack:

- a nightdress with buttons,
- a dressing gown or a bathrobe,
- a breastfeeding bra,
- underwear to wear after the childbirth,
- pads to use after childbirth (we call them maternity pads),
- bra pads,
- nappies for the baby,
- cream for irritated skin,
- clothes for the baby.

The woman should choose a name for the baby:

- a boy's name,
- a girl's name.

She can choose the name together with a person that she trusts.



How does a pregnant woman know that the childbirth has begun

Pregnant woman usually don't give birth exactly on the expected date of childbirth.

They can give birth before or after that date.

Childbirth starts slightly differently with every woman.

It usually starts with belly cramps.

The cramps are repeating.

At times, the woman feels a strong pain in the belly.

Then the pain stops for a while.

This repeats all the time.

The cramps are stronger and stronger.

The cramps are more and more frequent.

We call these cramps:

- **contractions.**

When a pregnant woman has regular contractions or when her water breaks, she has to go to the maternity ward.

This may mean that the childbirth has started.



How can childbirth also start

Sometimes childbirth starts with water that starts coming out of the woman's vagina.

We call this water **amniotic fluid**.

We say that the woman's waters broke.

Sometimes a lot of water comes out.

Like spilling a cup of water on the floor.

Sometimes there is just a small amount of water.

The water can be of different colours.

The water can be transparent, yellow, green, or brown.

When her waters break, the woman should go to hospital.

A family member may take her there by car.

She can also take a taxi.

Blood can start coming out of her vagina.

This can be dangerous.

The pregnant woman should call an ambulance.

The ambulance will take her to hospital.



Who is at the maternity ward

The pregnant woman may be accompanied by a person that she trusts.

This way she will have a person to calm her by her side.

There are midwives and obstetricians who will take care of her at the maternity ward.

Midwives are nurses.

Midwives stay with the pregnant woman for the entire duration of childbirth.

They make sure that everything is alright with her and the baby.

They give the pregnant woman advice about what to do.

An **obstetrician** is a doctor who helps with childbirth.

An obstetrician doesn't have to be with the woman all the time during childbirth.

An obstetrician usually helps towards the end of childbirth, when the woman is pushing.

After childbirth, the obstetrician sews the wounds from childbirth.

After childbirth, a **paediatrician** comes to examine the baby.



What happens at the maternity ward

When the pregnant woman comes to the maternity ward a midwife helps her to fill in the papers.

The woman shows her identity card and health card.

Then the midwife examines her on the birthing bed.

She puts her fingers into the pregnant woman's vagina to see if the baby will be born soon.

She also puts two belts around the pregnant woman's belly.

The belts are connected to a device that we call a **monitor**.

The device shows the baby's heartbeat.

Sometimes the midwife shaves the woman between her legs.

Sometimes the woman gets an **enema**.

This means that they put a tube in her anus.

A liquid is then introduced in the anus through the tube.

The liquid goes into her intestine.

After that the woman needs to poo.

Next, the woman goes to the **delivery room**.

This is where the baby is born.



What happens during childbirth

The woman gives birth for a few hours, sometimes even longer.

First, she gets **contractions**.

These are cramps in her belly.

The contractions are stronger and stronger.

The contractions make her uterus and vagina open.

This way, the baby can come out.

This usually lasts for a few hours.

When the baby is ready to be born, the woman wants to push.

But usually she has to wait.

The obstetrician or midwife tell her when to start pushing the baby out.

Pushing is similar to pooing.

When the woman pushes, the baby comes out.

If it is a normal childbirth, the head comes out first.

Then come the shoulders and the rest of the body.



Childbirth pain

During childbirth the woman has contractions.

This means

that she has strong cramps in her belly.

Sometimes she is in pain.

Then the pain goes away.

This repeats during the entire childbirth.

Towards the end, the cramps are very strong.

These cramps can be very painful and long.

Sometimes the woman vomits or gets diarrhoea because of that.

Sometimes it helps if the woman breathes correctly.

Sometimes it helps to use hot or cold compresses.

Sometimes it helps to massage the woman's back.

Sometimes a hot shower helps.

Some women find it helpful if they swing on an exercise ball.

The doctor can give the woman an injection to reduce the pain.

The woman then feels less pain.



In what positions can a woman push out her baby

At the end of childbirth, the woman has to push the baby out of her vagina. Pushing is similar to pooing. As the woman is pushing, the baby is coming out of her vagina.

The woman can push in different positions. It depends on which position is the most comfortable for her. Not all women like the same position.

The woman can push:

- on a birthing bed which can be adjusted in height,
- on a birthing chair,
- on her knees,
- sitting,
- standing,
- lying on her side.

The woman must be comfortable.



What happens when the baby is born

The woman pushes the baby out through her vagina.

We call this **natural childbirth**.

When the baby is out, it usually starts to cry.

The doctor puts the baby on the woman's belly.

Then the midwife:

- wipes,
- changes,
- weighs, and
- measures the baby.

In the belly,

the baby is connected to the mother by an **umbilical cord**.

During pregnancy, the baby gets food through the umbilical cord.

After childbirth,

the doctor or the woman's partner cuts the umbilical cord.

After childbirth, the woman also pushes out the **placenta**.

The placenta is a special organ, in which the baby grows in the belly.

When the woman pushes the placenta out it looks like a bloody substance.

The doctor uses a special needle and thread to sew any **childbirth injuries**.

The most common childbirth injuries include:

- cut perineum (episiotomy),
- torn perineum,
(the **perineum** is the part of the body between the vagina and the anus),
- torn vagina,
- torn cervix.

The woman stays

in the delivery room for two hours after she has given birth.

Then she goes

to another room with her baby.

They stay there for a few days.



What is a caesarean section

Sometimes the woman cannot push the baby out through her vagina.

Sometimes natural childbirth can be dangerous for the woman and her baby.

Natural childbirth is dangerous,

for example when the baby in the belly is upside down.

This means that its bottom is where its head should be.

In this case, the baby has to be taken out of the woman's belly by caesarean section.

A **caesarean section** is an operation.

They carry out the caesarean section in an operating room.

The doctor puts the woman to sleep,

so that she doesn't feel pain during the operation.

We call this anaesthesia.

Sometimes the doctor only gives a woman an injection in the back.

After that, she no longer feels pain from the waist down.

But she stays awake.

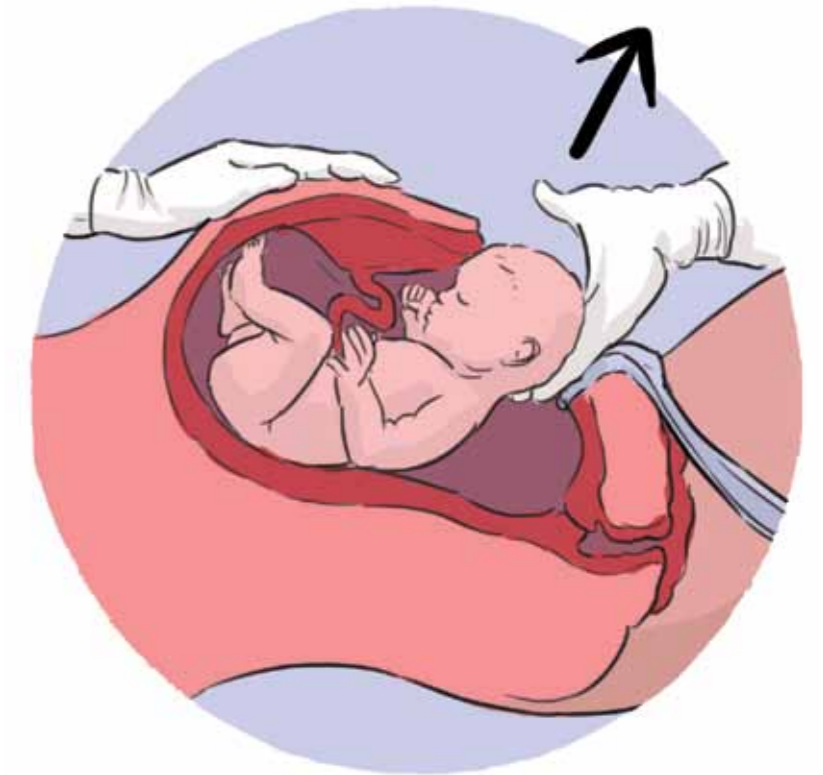
The doctor cuts the woman's belly.

The doctor takes the baby out of the belly.

Then the doctor sews up the belly.

If the woman was put to sleep, she wakes up.

The baby is already out.



What kind of problems can the woman have after childbirth

After childbirth, the woman can feel pain in different parts of her body. She may feel pain in her vagina between her legs. She may feel pain and tightness in her breasts. She may also feel pain in her belly. Sometimes the woman cannot sit or go to the toilet.

After childbirth, blood comes out of the woman's vagina. We call this **lochia**.

It looks like a heavy period.

The woman uses special maternity pads.

Some women feel like crying after birth.

For example they worry about whether they will be able to take care of their baby.

Some women find it helpful

if there is someone close to them by their side.

This can be for example her partner, mother, or assistant.



What is the post-natal period

For six weeks after giving birth, the woman has to observe special rules.

We call this period the **post-natal period**.

The woman should rest a lot during this time.

She should spend a lot of time with the baby.

She should also:

- eat healthy food which doesn't cause gas,
- drink plenty of fluids (without bubbles).

The woman should shower between her legs a few times per day.

She also has to change her maternity pads often.

During this period she shouldn't:

- have sexual intercourse,
- carry heavy objects,
- swim in swimming pools.

After six weeks, the woman should visit her gynaecologist.

The gynaecologist will examine her to see if the wounds from childbirth have healed properly.

The gynaecologist will check if everything is alright with her sexual organs.



How should a woman take care of her baby

The woman and her baby stay at the maternity ward for a few days after the birth.

The baby stays in the room together with its mother.

The woman learns:

- how to change the baby,
- how to bathe the baby,
- how to breastfeed the baby.

The woman breastfeeds by putting her nipple in the baby's mouth. Through the nipple, the baby drinks milk from the breast.

The baby doesn't need any other food.

Some women cannot breastfeed.

They buy formula at the pharmacy.

Formula is a powder that has to be mixed with water.

The woman feeds the baby the formula with the help of a bottle.

After a few days, they go home.

At home, a breastfeeding consultant can help the woman with breastfeeding.

The mother should take her baby to a child doctor for examinations.



What happens if a woman cannot take care of her baby

The woman should decide herself if she wants to keep the baby.
She should talk to someone close to her.
Maybe somebody can help her take care of the baby.

Sometimes, a social worker visits the woman at the maternity ward.
The social worker talks to the woman about
whether she wants to keep the baby.

Some women decide not to take care of their baby.
After the birth, the woman can give the baby to other people.
These people will take care of the baby instead of her.
For example the women can give the baby for **adoption**.
This means that she gives up the baby.

She then doesn't have any more rights towards the baby.
The baby goes to live with another family for ever.
The woman cannot take care of the baby anymore.
The woman can also give the baby to **foster care**.
This means that somebody else will take care of the baby.
In this case, the woman can visit the baby.





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SOŽITJE

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Easy-to-read booklet



This booklet was created as part of the PAL4youth project – **a partnership project for a more active life for young people with intellectual disabilities**. The project included two organisations providing support to persons with intellectual disabilities and their family members:
Sožitje Association from Slovenia and SPMP ČR - Inclusion Czech Republic.

This publication was funded by the European Commission. The publication content only reflects the views of its authors. The national agency and European Commission are not responsible for any use made of the information included in the publication.

Further reading:

Being a Woman



Being a Man



Love, Sex and Me



A Visit to the Gynaecologist



Pregnancy



Sexual Violence



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

