Childbirth Resources
By Laura C. Strom

So you’re having a baby! How do you feel? Happy, ecstatic, nervous, terrified??! Maybe you’re just thinking about starting your family, and you want to know what you’re getting into. Either way, you’re beginning a journey that will change your life forever.

Being pregnant is one of the most amazing times in a woman’s life. It’s also pretty scary. The best way to prepare yourself is to be educated. You can’t ask too many questions, or read too much literature, or be too well prepared. Here are some basic questions you can start investigating, and some resources to help you. We’re lucky to have so many wonderful website resources available at the click of a mouse to help us make choices and get educated.

Who’s going to care for me during my pregnancy, and deliver my baby?

These days you can choose. Would you like to have an Ob-Gyn, or a Certified Nurse-Midwife? Will you have a doula (a labor coach) attend your birth? If your pregnancy is low risk, you might opt for a midwife delivery. Midwives try to help women have as natural a birth as possible. They always have a doctor as a back up if needed. Perhaps you’re just more comfortable with an M.D. You still might want to have a doula present to support you during your birthing process. Here are some references to check out:

**Midwives & Doulas**
- www.midwife.org American College of Nurse-Midwives
- www.midwifeinfo.com Midwife Information.com
- www.dona.org Doulas of North America
- www.doulanetwork.com Doula Network
- www.cappa.net Childbirth and Postpartum Professional Association

**Medical Doctors**

Making a birth plan – a checklist with all my questions, preferences, and alternatives

There are lots of great books out there to help you with this. Now is the time to go and purchase one. You can find fun interactive sites on the web which will allow you to create your own unique birth plan. They ask you great questions you probably never considered, like whether siblings can be present for the birth, if you want pitocin (a medication to speed up the process), how you feel about episiotomies, IV’s, and having fetal monitors. Here are a couple of options:

**Birth Planners - Interactive**
- www.babycenter.com/calculators/birthplan/
- www.childbirth.org/interactive/birthplan.html

Where will I have my baby?

Hospital, birthing center, or at home. If your birth is low risk, perhaps you’d like to have your baby in the intimacy of your own home, or a birthing center. Many hospitals have birthing rooms, so you don’t have to undergo a transfer from a labor to a delivery room when you’re on the verge of delivering your baby. Be sure to visit your local hospital to see their birthing facilities. Here are some resources to help you decide where your birth will take place:
Birth Centers
www.birthcenters.org National Association Of Childbearing Centers

Home Births
www.mana.org Midwife Alliance of North America – lists caregivers who specialize in home births
www.wisewomanchildbirth.com This site links to Bay Area Homebirth Collective

What kind of birth process would I like to use?

Will you take a childbirth class? Would you like to have a water birth? (No, your baby won’t drown in the water! The baby doesn’t start to breath on its own until the umbilical cord is cut.) Would you like to use the Lamaze method, or perhaps the Bradley method? Do you want to try for natural childbirth, or would you prefer pain medications? Get educated!

Childbirth Education
www.icea.org International Childbirth Education Association
www.waterbirth.org Waterbirth International
www.lamaze-childbirth.com Lamaze International
www.bradleybirth.com The Bradley Method of Natural Childbirth
www.bygpub.com/natural/natural-childbirth.htm The Natural Family Site
www.asahq.org/patientEducation/childbirth.htm American Society of Anesthesiologists article on pain medications available for birthing mothers

Other things to consider

Will you have your son circumcised? The American Pediatric Association considers it totally medically unnecessary. Contrary to popular notion, it’s not just a “little snip”, but is a serious procedure. If you decide to have it done, know the risks. Insist on pain medications for your baby, as the procedure is quite painful. Here are some informational sites:

Circumcision
www.circumcision.org The Circumcision Resource Center
www.cirp.org Circumcision Information Resource Pages

Are you going to breastfeed? Even a few days of breastfeeding will help your infant to be healthier. There are lots of resources available for working moms, including electric breast pumps that are easy to use, and can be rented for a few months at a time. Breastfeeding is easy, always the right temperature, and you always have it with you!

Breastfeeding
www.breastfeeding.com Breastfeeding.com Support for Mothers
www.lalecheleague.com The La Leche League

Would you like to donate your baby’s umbilical cord blood? This way you can save the potentially life-saving stem cells for medical science to use in cures for all kinds of diseases, including cancers. Cord blood banking is relatively new, and has to be arranged prior to your 34th week of pregnancy. It is safe and painless for you and your baby. Check out this article for a fascinating read on the great medical potential of cord blood banking.

Cord Blood Banking
www.babycenter.com/childbirth Click on Cord Blood Banking: An Overview

Remember – get educated. Keep asking questions. Having a baby is one of the most exciting journeys of your life. Take care of your self and your baby by getting good prenatal care as soon as you know you are pregnant. Enjoy the ride, and good luck!