

What does a woman need during childbirth?

“Compassion. Awareness on the part of the staff that this is a unique event for us. That this is an event that affects many lives.”

“To be listened to and heard.”

“Above all, respect for the body and wishes.”

“Calmness.”

“Allowing movement, showering, food, and drink, not suppressing basic needs.”

“To be respected, to be believed, to have things explained to me, to have the right to make decisions about my own body.”

“That the birth process is treated with the respect it deserves.”

“I would need encouragement, warmth.”

“I would want them to explain the procedures to me and wait for my consent.”

“Respect for the word NO.”

“Respect for the ability of the female body to give birth on its own, if we allow it to.”

“More help with establishing breastfeeding, and for staff to have professional knowledge about breastfeeding.”

“Psychological support for women in labor and mothers.”

Advanced midwife

- ... considers pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding to be a natural part of the human life cycle.
- ... is the guardian of the physiological, normal, natural processes of pregnancy, childbirth, lactation, breastfeeding, and the postpartum period.
- ... puts the mother at the center and works closely with her.
- ... realizes the mother's rights to safe, appropriate, adequate, effective, timely, respectful, inclusive, personally and culturally sensitive maternity care of the highest possible standard and to the best available level of physical and mental health for the woman and child and their protection.
- ... her knowledge is the result of well-considered traditions of birth assistance, modern scientific knowledge, and the thoughtful experience that midwives gain during births.
- ... it enables the empowerment of women at the very beginning of their new role as mothers.
- ... and thus provides compassionate birth care.

For the full realization of the role of midwives!

- On December 14, 2021, **midwifery was inscribed into the Slovenian Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage.**
- The Natural Beginnings Society was designated as the bearer of midwifery on January 27, 2023.
- On December 6, 2023, **midwifery was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.** Slovenia is one of eight countries participating in the nomination.
- A short **documentary film about contemporary Slovenian midwifery, Midwifery. Knowledge, Skills, and Practices**, Ministry of Culture, Republic of Slovenia, 2023, also features progressive midwives and the Natural Beginnings Society.

The importance and role of midwives, as described in the nomination for inscription on UNESCO's Representative List, have not yet been fully realized, as midwifery has been somewhat neglected due to certain social and historical circumstances. Like women in birth process, progressive midwifery needs favourable attention, care, and active support. Midwifery also requires constant critical reflection.

Natural Beginnings strives

- ... to ensure that every midwife can truly devote herself to each individual mother-to-be by being with her throughout the entire birth process. Ideally, the midwife and the woman would meet during pregnancy, and the midwife would care for the baby and mother during the postpartum period.
- ... midwives would support women during childbirth at home, in maternity hospitals, and in birthing centers.
- ... that midwives would care for pregnant women, mothers, and newborns in postpartum wards, visit families with newborns, and inform and advise women on self-care during pregnancy and after childbirth, on preparing for childbirth and parenthood, on breastfeeding, infant care, and interacting with their baby ...



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What does a good midwife do during childbirth?



Establishes and maintains cooperation, monitors, advises, supports, guides, leads if necessary.

Provides psychological support and ensures physical and psychological well-being: listens, talks about what is happening, feelings, needs, wishes, challenges.

Advises using the toilet and shower.

Enables close physical contact between the mother and newborn, and between the father and newborn after birth.

Together with the mother, she fills out the paperwork, asks about her wishes for the birth and postnatal care, and carefully reads the birth plan, if the mother has one.

Carefully monitors the health of the woman and baby and the progress of the birth – checks, measures, observes, assesses, examines, records.

Ensures dim lighting, a warm room, and comfort.

Advises movement, rest, and changing positions.

Ensures the involvement of the partner and enables cohabitation, if possible.

Cuts the umbilical cord when it stops pulsating or after the placenta is born.

Conversations are quiet and calm.

Recommends drinking fluids and eating snacks.

Assists with placing the newborn on the breast and with breastfeeding, if necessary.

Before performing any procedures or interventions on the mother, ensures that she has made an informed choice: suggests and explains what she intends to do, waits for the mother's decision on whether she agrees or rejects the proposal, and respects that decision.

Follows current guidelines.

Her touch is respectful.

Advises on coping with labor pains: she helps with massage, visualization, compresses, and other pain relief techniques in accordance with the wishes of the mother.

Ensures that parents are informed before any procedures or interventions are performed on the newborn.

Collaborates with other health professionals when necessary.

Ensures privacy, peace, and quiet.

Carefully monitors the stretching of the perineum and uses approaches to reduce the possibility of perineal damage.

Touches the newborn respectfully and only when necessary.

What else can a good midwife do during childbirth? Depending on the birth environment.

If the woman wants pain medication during birth, she provides appropriate advice.

Rarely applies pressure to the top of the uterus.

In some cases, suggests artificial rupture of the membranes.

In some cases, she may administer medication.

Rarely performs an episiotomy.

In some cases, she may suggest the use of a catheter to empty the bladder.

She does not suggest enemas or shaving.

What should I do when preparing for childbirth?

I determine what I need during childbirth and express my expectations, including those regarding the midwife's role. I can prepare a birth plan and discuss its contents with the midwife who will be with me during childbirth. I research different birth environments and talk to different midwives. I ask other women about their experiences.

More about human rights in childbirth in Slovenia

