

GIVING BIRTH: ASK ABOUT YOUR RIGHTS



Since the dawn of time, pregnancy, labour and birth have been normal and natural life events. It is, however, **a time in your life when you will have to take several decisions** regarding the care you will receive. **These decisions are for you, and you alone, to make.**

Events surrounding birth deserve to be experienced harmoniously and **it is your right to receive the appropriate support** (information, care, treatments, etc.) **to help you make informed decisions.**

The **Plateforme Citoyenne pour une naissance respectée** (Citizens Platform for Respect in Childbirth) is a non-profit organisation gathering citizens, users, parents, health professionals, associations, women's right activists, members of the civil society. The Platform exists to **highlight the right each woman has to choose** the circumstances of the birth, for the well-being of the newborn baby, the mother and their partner.

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DURING YOUR PREGNANCY, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...

- **To be properly informed about the progress of your pregnancy**, about labour and birth, and about breastfeeding
- **To choose the health professional who will follow your pregnancy** - whether doctor or midwife - and to change health professional at any time during your pregnancy, should you wish to do so
- **To be informed about the different environments where you can give birth** (hospital, 'birth house', home), and about what differentiates them (routines, protocols, rates and types of interventions). You should be able to visit them.
- **To be informed about limits and unwanted side effects of suggested medications** and interventions.
- **To refuse medication and treatments** that may be proposed to you.
- **To receive information** from your health professional **on alternatives to medication and proposed interventions.**
- **To be informed about the possibility to have a vaginal birth even if you have had a caesarean birth** in the past (VBAC).
- **To request a second opinion** on an issue that concerns you.

DURING LABOUR AND BIRTH, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...

- **To experience labour and birth at your own rhythm** and without interventions that you do not agree to.
- **To be supported by at least one person of your choice** during the entire labour and birth.
- **To refuse to be examined by students.**
- **To be informed about all the reasons for, and effects on you and your baby of any intervention** (induction, stimulation of labour, forceps, episiotomy, epidural, continuous monitoring, serum, etc.) and to be able to refuse any intervention you feel inappropriate.
- **To eat and drink** at any time.
- **To give birth in the position you find best.**
- **To limit the number of persons** present during the birth (people close to you and health professionals).

IF YOU ARE TOLD A CAESAREAN SECTION IS NEEDED, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...

- **To know the medical reasons** guiding such a decision, the degree of urgency and possible alternatives.
- **To be informed about the different types of anaesthesia available** and to choose the one that suits you best.
- **To be accompanied by your partner or other person important to you** at all times should you wish.

AFTER THE BIRTH OF YOUR BABY YOU HAVE THE RIGHT...

- **To have skin-to-skin contact with your baby** right from the moment of birth, and to keep him/her in your arms as long as you wish.
- **To know why some tests and interventions on your baby** are proposed, and to be able to refuse or delay them (eye drops, vitamin K injection, blood tests, etc.)
- **To breastfeed your baby on demand or not to breastfeed.**
- To receive appropriate guidance to help you breastfeed.
- **To demand not to be disturbed by the routines of the health institution**, should you need to rest or have privacy.

- **To refuse proposed medication** if you judge them unnecessary.
- **To leave the health institution as soon as you want to**, even if the authorisation to leave has not yet been signed by a health professional.

PATIENTS' RIGHTS

Law from August 22, 2002

It is your right to receive quality care that meets your needs in full respect of human dignity and autonomy. **Your consent is needed for any medical act. To obtain your consent, you must have been informed about the:**

- Objective of the act
- Nature of the act
- Degree of urgency
- Duration
- Frequency
- Contra-indications
- Secondary effects
- Risks associated with the intervention
- Follow-up care
- Possible alternatives
- Financial aspects
- Possible consequences should you refuse the medical act.

You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time.

This leaflet aims at helping you prepare better for a pregnancy and birth experience in harmony with your personal wishes and in accordance with your rights. **It contains information that will help you identify topics you may wish to discuss with your doctor or midwife.** It has been written in accordance with Belgium's law on patient rights. **If you consider that your rights are not respected, you can file a complaint with the appropriate mediation service.**

REGARDLESS OF WHO YOU TALK TO, YOU CAN DEMAND CLEAR AND THOROUGH INFORMATION.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

naissancerespectee.be | kce.fgov.be | alternatives.be

THEY SUPPORT US



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