

### Red Raspberry Tea

The herb red raspberry has wonderful properties to strengthen and heal various systems in the body, and it is especially good for the uterus. High in vitamin and mineral content (C, E, A, B, calcium, iron, phosphorus, potassium), as well as fragrine (an alkaloid that strengthens muscles in the pelvic region), raspberry leaf is a uterine tonic; it strengthens/tones this muscle, and improves labor and afterbirth recovery. Raspberry helps to relieve nausea and pain, helps to make contractions more efficient, and has a beneficial effect on hormonal balance (it is a good afterbirth tonic for prophylactic treatment of PPD). Midwives often remark that their clients who consistently drank RR tea during pregnancy had easier labors and faster recoveries than those who did not. Of course, it's a relative "better;" a toned uterus will lessen your chances of complications, particularly uterine atony and hemorrhage, and make the labor more efficient...but it won't make labor/delivery painless.

Master herbalist Dr. John Christopher sums up the benefits of RR during pregnancy thus: "When taken regularly in pregnancy, the infusion will quiet inappropriate premature pains and produce a safe, speedy, and easy delivery. Raspberry leaves stimulate, tone, and regulate before and during childbearing, assisting contractions and checking hemorrhage during labor, relieving afterpains, then strengthening, cleansing, and enriching the milk of the mother in the post-delivery period." And a summary from a medicinal herbal formulary: "...It is said that raspberry will, during labor, increase the activity of the uterine contractions when these are feeble, even in instances where ergot has failed, and that it has been found serviceable in afterpains." Personal study will reveal a wealth of information on the benefits of RR leaf during pregnancy, birth and afterward. It is my strong opinion as an herbalist and student midwife, as well as through my personal experiences with 3 labors and my knowledge of other women's experiences both with and without RR, that this is a fantastic herb that truly works; it positively impacts labor, delivery, and recovery. You should drink a cup of RR tea daily throughout the entire pregnancy, and drink up to 3 cups of RR tea daily in the last trimester. Drink RR tea through your labor as well.

### Posterior Baby

Posterior babies are a common and avoidable cause of C-sections. This outcome is neither unavoidable nor inevitable (except in the cases of true [cephalopelvic disproportion](#), which is quite rare and can be anticipated based on first trimester pelvimetry assesment and fetal overlap checks in last trimester), yet is is often treated as such by OBs who do not possess the hands-on skills and knowledge to manage posterior complications.

You do not want baby to be in posterior position before birth; this malpresentation complicates descent and engagement. Posterior babies cause slow labors, with first stages going through fits and starts sometimes for days. Posterior presentations often result in painful back labor. Posterior babies are usually the reason a woman's labor "gets stuck." In fact, posterior arrest can develop during active labor, or even during pushing if baby's forehead lodges behind mom's pelvic bone. Good practitioners know numerous maneuvers and techniques...such as repositioning mom, physical exercises, pelvic press, even manually dislodging and rotating

baby...that can reverse this complication. This training is becoming less common in modern obstetrics; they rely more heavily upon drugs and scalpels, rather than the physical skills necessary to remedy posterior difficulties. Vertical positions for laboring and pushing are very important. You need to be mobile and active during labor to help alleviate the posterior complication. (Epidurals can actually cause babies to turn posterior.)

The best way to avoid posterior complications is to turn baby before labor commences, or early in labor. Understanding the signs of a posterior baby in your last weeks of pregnancy, and working to remedy it, will go a long way toward your successful natural birth. [When conducting interviews of potential practitioners, add the following question to your list: "Describe your methods for attempting to alleviate posterior arrest."]

Your midwife will palpate you at each exam and tell you baby's position...she can feel where baby's back is; it needs to be along your abdomen, not your spine. If she tells you baby is anterior (occiput anterior) or left-sided (left occiput anterior), you're in good territory. Posterior babies are often the result of lessened physical activity, mama laying on her back throughout much of the pregnancy, or lounging in a recliner. But even active moms can end up with posterior babies, so do the work required to rotate that baby. Always sleep on your left side, do pelvic rocks on hands-and-knees regularly, lean forward while sitting in a chair, try to get tummy down whenever you can, maybe in the tub where you are more buoyant; you can also do a [diaphragmatic release](#). Participate in gentle exercise regularly, particularly yoga and walking.

A must read for all pregnant women is the website [www.spinningbabies.com](http://www.spinningbabies.com) for information and instructions on how to turn malpositioned babies. In the end, if you just can't get baby to rotate on his own in the last few weeks, a good midwife can work manually to rotate baby. Also, the homeopathic remedy Kali Carbonicum can relieve back labor and help baby to turn during labor/delivery. You want to take one dose of a high potency (30X or even 200) if you know baby is posterior, or if you don't, as soon as your midwife or you recognizes that your labor is "stuck." The case studies presented in [Homeopathic Medicines for Childbirth](#) described the baby turning and labor picking up a few minutes after the first dose. Other homeopathic remedies can also be helpful for turning posterior babies. (You can purchase homeopathics at a health food store or online.) Regular adjustments by a [Webster-certified chiropractor](#) are extraordinarily beneficial for helping baby to achieve proper position before birth. Women who receive such chiropractic care report easier labors and positive natural birth outcomes.

### Birth Environment Matters

*"When women are in charge of their environment, when they have the privacy to labor undisturbed, when they feel completely at ease and supported, outcomes are always superior." -- Elizabeth Davis, [Hearts and Hands](#)*

As midwifery educator and author Elizabeth Davis says, "Birth works! We just have to get out of the way." The need for peace, privacy, respect and nonintervention during the birth process is imperative, emotionally and physically. In a natural, undisturbed birth, the physiological and

emotional mechanisms of labor proceed less painfully and more beneficially for both mother and baby. The most positive birth outcomes occur when a woman is allowed the time, room, support and peace to respond to her body and surrender to the process. In this regard, midwife attended homebirths provide the optimum birth experience. In a homebirth, you will avoid the cascade of technological interventions that lead to unpleasant and unrewarding outcomes, including c-sections; you will avoid the pitfalls of the impersonal, highly interventive, technocratic system that impedes your ability to progress and birth naturally. With a traditional midwife-attended birth, you will be able to experience the natural flow of events, allowing your body work as needed, gaining serenity and comfort from the environment and support team. You will become empowered as your body does what God designed it to do.

One example of the superiority and benefit of non-technocratic birth is the “hormone cocktail” experienced during labor. During active labor in an undisturbed, comfortable setting, a woman benefits more fully from endorphin releases. The brain releases various hormones during the labor process...endorphins lessen pain and increase euphoria, early and prolific adrenaline release can block oxytocin and escalate discomfort. Emotional and physical agitation can hinder endorphin release. To increase the release of endorphins rather than adrenalin in first stage labor, neocortex activity needs to slow down. This is accomplished by laboring in a peaceful, quiet, private environment; bright lights, noises, stimulation and a feeling of being watched increases neocortex activity. The peaceful labor environment also facilitates uninterrupted release of oxytocin, stimulating efficient contractions and labor progress, and encouraging the loving, bonding flow of emotions upon birth.

Another example of the importance of noninterventionist birth is illustrated by activity surrounding the pushing phase. During second stage labor, a surge of adrenalin is beneficial, as it creates the fetal ejection reflex. In an unstructured, noninterventionist labor environment, a woman will naturally choose to be upright when this urge to push occurs. Physiologically, an upright and forward leaning position increases pelvic dimensions with an “opening” of the back. Mom will also feel an energy boost at this time, and likely desire to release noise. Accepting this process and moving freely with it will improve the birth. Holding back, tensing posture and restraining the release of sound, will hinder progress. (Remember: open mouth, open cervix.) The forced, unnatural postures practiced as protocol in hospital births are counterproductive to the birth process. Breath-holding, continuous bearing down and a supine or semi-recumbent position cause stress to the baby and increase rates of episiotomy and neonatal resuscitation. An unfettered, unmedicated pushing phase allows mom to be spontaneous...moving, breathing and pushing at will according to the signals of her body. She retains more energy, preserves her perineum, and baby receives more oxygen. Positive, satisfying, joyous birth outcomes (both physical and emotional), along with avoidance of medical violations and iatrogenic birth complications are the hallmark of midwife-supported homebirth.

To learn more about the cascade of interventions and the dangers of a medically managed birth, as well as the serious flaws in the modern American birth culture, see the resource list below.

### Your Birth Team Matters

It is probably self-evident that choosing your birth team is essential to your success. You should never have anyone involved in your birth (not even a family member) who is not absolutely supportive of your desires. Emotional negativity during your birth can hinder your progress and dampen the joy of the event. Interviewing potential practitioners is very important; please do not hire someone based solely on your insurance coverage. Birth is one of the most important and most challenging events in your life...whom you choose to provide care and assistance matters! Before you make your choice, ask yourself why you would hire someone to help prepare and assist you in your birth who was unfamiliar with the nuanced and variable physiology of normal birth? Interview carefully and fully understand paradigms and protocols, knowledge base and skill sets, and expect these things to affect your birth process in some way. And remember, whomever you choose is working for you...not the other way around.

### Evening Primrose Oil

EPO has a beneficial hormone-like effect that helps to ripen (soften) the cervix and prepare it to dilate fully for delivery. Starting at week 36, take 1,000 mg of EPO orally every day. Beginning at 37 weeks, also insert one cap vaginally...try to position it behind the lip of the cervix.

### Squat during Braxton Hicks

During the last few weeks before the onset of your labor, you may notice Braxton Hicks contractions (practice contractions). If you are able to feel a BH contraction, you want to squat during it...do a nice, deep squat. This helps to get baby's head positioned lower in the pelvis, gets him "engaged" sooner; thus giving you an advantage during labor.

### "Inducing" Labor

Babies come when they are ready. The conventional technocratic view of birth does not accept this paradigm, and OBs habitually induce labors, causing a cascade of difficulties for baby and mama. This unnatural approach to birth defies common sense and the design of our bodies. Even the technocrats, however, are beginning to see that forcing babies to come early is anathema to their well-being ([studies show inductions linked to autism](#)).

As an aspiring holistic midwife, and a Creationist, I am a noninterventionist. Unless mama and/or baby are suffering a legitimate physiological risk that requires consideration of intervention, it is best to leave well alone and allow the natural processes of labor and birth to take their course. Remember, most OBs (and some CNMs) have little training and experience in the physiology of normal birth. The majority of OBs are trained interventionists and surgeons with a fear-based paradigm. They have unrealistic views of timing and progress of labor and will needlessly intervene, causing myriad problems for both baby and mama.

Normal gestation is 37 to 42 weeks. In days gone by, a woman would not be given a "due date," but rather a time of month to expect baby's arrival. The estimated due date (EDD) that our modern birth culture emphasizes has become confusing and problematic for pregnant moms. The EDD is just that...an estimate...based on the last menstrual period you had previous to

conception. It is not a date to pin your hopes, nor your baby's birthday, on. Even natural means to induce labor should be avoided, as we want to allow baby as much time as he needs to develop in the womb before birth. Again, if no signs of actual physiological distress exist, don't intervene with even natural induction. Yes, the end of pregnancy can be quite uncomfortable, but patiently allowing the process to take its natural course is best for baby and mama.

If you are nearing that 42-week mark (or past it) and are miserable, and you feel you want to attempt to "kick start" labor, here are some natural options:

- Homeopathic caulophyllum (blue cohosh) or cimicifuga (black cohosh) at 6 or 30 potency, 3 pellets/3x day; or caulophyllum 200x at every half hour for two hours
- Herbal black cohosh and blue cohosh combination, 20 drops in warm water every hour for five to six hours; if nothing happens, try again in two days
- Essential oils of jasmine, clary sage and fennel, applied to ankles and toes
- Stimulation of pressure points around ankles (the inside of leg above the ankle bone and the outside of leg behind the ankle bone), the webbing of the hands (between thumb and forefinger) and lower back above buttocks; use EOs above, press and rub the areas
- Walking, squatting, swimming
- Sex and nipple stimulation
- Eating spicy foods
- See also cervical ripening with EPO above

Blue cohosh encourages the uterus to begin contracting and increases intensity of contractions. Black cohosh encourages coordinated and effective contractions. These herbs can also be used to help normalize a labor that has begun, but is lagging or not producing effective contractions. Remember, there is a significant difference between a truly stalled labor and the "failure to progress" syndrome that the technocratic OBs and CNMs use against laboring women. If you subject yourself to the technocratic system, remember that they are not familiar with normal physiological birth and that you are unreasonably and unnaturally put on the clock.

From [Homeopath Helen Swan](#) (read her site for more natural induction tips):

In pregnancy Caulophyllum may help if:

- You have a lot of irritating Braxton Hicks contractions
- You are well past your due date but nothing is happening. Remember, normal = 37-42 weeks and in a straightforward pregnancy, risks do not increase until after 42 weeks. Talk to your midwife.
- SUGGESTED Caul. 6 or 30c, 3 x day for 2 days. More frequently or higher potencies only if advised by a homeopath.

(As a very last resort, if you and your midwife feel that you need to encourage labor, consider using the castor oil method; please consult with a midwife before doing so, as this can be very potent and cause vomiting and diarrhea and difficult contractions...it is not easy on the body.)

There is no surefire way to induce labor; if you try these natural means (excepting the castor oil) and they do not work, please wait: your baby is not ready for birth. As long as your vital signs and baby's vitals are good, as long as you have adequate amniotic fluid (which you can control with proper hydration and baths), leave baby alone to come when she is ready.

### GBS+

Group B Strep isn't as scary as it can be made to sound, and there are natural and effective alternatives to pharmaceutical antibiotics, including garlic and probiotic vaginal treatments during the last month of pregnancy. If you test positive for GBS in your urine, you have a systemic infection. If you test positive only vaginally/rectally, you may have only a localized colonization. Either way, an aggressive proactive protocol to treat and eliminate the GBS before onset of labor is highly recommended. I suggest the following:

- Use good quality probiotic containing a strain particularly suited to vaginal flora (L. Rhamnosus)
  - Take 1 cap orally and insert 1 cap vaginally 3x/daily (try Jarrow-Dophilus EPS or Renew Life Ultimate Flora Vaginal Support)
- Insert 1 garlic clove vaginally overnight for 7 days (knick it with a knife...if it burns too much, wrap in a bit of cheesecloth); also consider using orally, up to 9 cloves a day (throughout the day, not all at once; it helps to smash and eat with butter)
- Use high frequency dosing Vitamin C therapy
  - Obtain good quality nonGMO Vitamin C (try Doctor's Best); take 250 mg. every 30 minutes for a week...alternately, dose to bowel tolerance (your maintenance dose is how much it takes to significantly loosen your stools)...this is your saturation level. With vitamin C therapy, it's not how much you take at any one time, it's how often you take it. The body only absorbs so much C at one time (this varies depending on body chemistry and need) and uses it quickly
- Douche with apple cider vinegar: 1/4 cup ACV to 3/4 cup distilled H2O, a couple times weekly
- Colloidal Silver: Saturate the vagina with Colloidal Silver by rubbing it along the vaginal walls and along the rectum throughout the day. Take it orally, 1 Tb. 3x/daily
- Use topical essential oils vaginally, rub generously inside vagina and along rectum
  - Use a blend containing Tea Tree, Lavender and Oregano (good Immunity blends are available from Young Living, doTerra, Revive and Hopewell). Dilute in carrier oil if you find it burns
- Take Oregon Grape Root tincture, 15 drops daily...this natural antibiotic is safe and quite effective against various strep strains

Further reading: <https://alaboroflove.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ultimate-flora.jpg>  
<https://www.thebeatingheartdoulas.com/beatingheartdoulasblog/gbs?format=amp>  
<https://mamanatural.com/group-b-strep-treatment/>  
<http://www.drmmomma.org/2009/09/gbs-group-b-strep-midwifery-homebirth.html>  
<https://www.gentlebirth.org/archives/gbs.html>

If you attack the GBS proactively, you should alleviate concerns. If you are planning a homebirth, though, it is a good idea to retest after using this protocol for a week or two, as



procuring a negative GBS result is highly recommended in case of emergency transfer to hospital. If you end up in hospital and do not have record of a negative GBS result, you will be bombarded with IV antibiotics, and your baby can end up in the NICU without any signs of infection even being present...it's just industry protocol. So to avoid such pain and misery, I recommend you diligently treat the GBS and consider doing one Hibiclens douche right before retesting (use 2 Tb. Hibiclens to 2 oz. warm water, douche to back of vagina and also swipe rectum). This procedure is highly effective in suppressing GBS, and you are quite likely to test negative. The treatment protocol I recommend is important for clearing your body of GBS, which is a good idea whether or not you choose to use Hibiclens.

The European protocol of doing a [Hibiclens vaginal wash](#) at onset of labor (or rupture of membranes) and every 6 hours until birth is proven to be quite effective (this is backed by studies). Hibiclens is an antiseptic soap that will suppress vaginal flora for 4-5 hours. This treatment minimizes GBS colonization. Antibiotics, on the other hand, will systemically wipe out your entire microbiome, the effects of which can last for months...and treatment with antibiotics has not even been proven to be efficacious against GBS infection. Everything has its risks... Hibiclens impairs vaginal flora for a time, but antibiotics are far worse...and while GBS neonatal infections are quite rare (even if mom is GBS+ and untreated at birth), there is still risk in doing nothing at all...but it is every woman's prerogative to do her research and make the best decision she can for herself and her baby based on informed consent.

- Hibiclens can be purchased at most drug stores without a prescription. The smallest bottle should be sufficient. Use a peri wash bottle, or buy a disposable douche bottle, empty contents, rinse and fill with solution below.
- Prepare a 0.2% chlorhexidine solution by combining 7 ml (1.5 tsp) of Hibiclens (4% chlorhexidine) with 133 ml (.5 cup plus 2 tsp) of water.
- Transfer your diluted solution into a disposable douche bottle or your peri bottle from your birth supplies box.
- Flush the vagina with the 140 ml of 0.2% chlorhexidine wash at the onset of labor or at rupture of membranes, whichever comes first. Use gentle and not excessive pressure.
- Repeat every 6 hours.
- Use the entire amount each time, and mix a fresh batch for every application.

If for any reason you end up using pharmaceutical antibiotics, be aware that you and baby will likely end up with pathogenic overgrowth (such as candida), which can become a nasty case of thrush or even long-lasting gut dysbiosis. I recommend prophylactic use of probiotics, bifidus for the baby and acidophilus for Mama, immune boosting and antifungal herbs and nutrients, and the [GAPS protocol](#). Remember, whatever protocol you choose, whether less invasive or none at all, it's a good idea to monitor baby for any signs of infection postpartum, and to nurse aggressively, making sure baby gets all the colostrum possible those first three days after birth, as that is an incredible immunity protector.

### “Analgesic” Aromatherapy Blend

I created a blend of essential and herbal oils for pain relief during labor. This blend acts as an analgesic, and reduces inflammation and nerve pain. When the hard labor starts and the contractions get you quite uncomfy, rub it on your belly and on your back, if needed. The recipe is 2 Tb. Arnica infused oil, 2Tb. St. John's Wort infused oil, 8 drops Lavender essential oil, 3 drops Clary sage essential oil, 2 drops Ylang Ylang essential oil, 1 drop Chamomile essential oil. You must use true essential oils of therapeutic quality. I recommend Aromatherapeutix, DoTerra, Heritage, and Young Living essential oils...they can be found online. Alternatively, you can purchase the blend from me, in the [EWW shop](#).

### Labor in Water...Birth in Water

I labored in water for my first birth (but delivered “on land”), and I did complete water births with the subsequent babies. After comparing the experiences, I would never go back to land births. Waterbirth makes a difference on multiple levels. First, laboring in water provides what midwives call the “aquadural.” Sure, it's not a numbing cocaine derivative (thankfully!), but it does really reduce the pain of contractions...and you don't want to be numb...you need to be able to feel what is happening and be mobile so you can actively birth your baby. Correct temperature water not only helps with the pain, it also tends to speed up the labor by causing your body to relax, which get you to birth more quickly. Waterbirth is gentler for baby and for mama during the birth process, and it facilitates speedier recover for mama's perineal area because of the reduced trauma. The water temperature is very important, as is a pure water source and a clean/sterile birth pool. If the water is too cold, it slows your labor...too hot and it can make you uncomfortable. Water should be no warmer than 98°. Check out [www.waterbirth.org](http://www.waterbirth.org) for information, tubs, etc.

### Arnica for Trauma

Homeopathic Arnica (taken orally, dose of 6X to 30C) taken every hour or two during your labor will decrease trauma to soft tissues and facilitate speedy healing post birth. Start taking Arnica once you hit hard labor and take it until you birth. Arnica will work to diminish trauma to your womb, also. And if baby is born with bruising, you can administer Arnica to him and greatly reduce his pain and healing time. Also, Arnica is an emergency remedy for unresponsive, limp, shallowly breathing babies.

### Perineal Care

A good example of a largely unnecessary obstetrical intervention is the episiotomy. This violation of a woman's perineum is based on the belief that her body is unable to function properly of its own accord; that the vagina is inadequate to accommodate birth. Other than the rarest of cases, episiotomy is completely unnecessary and an insult to a woman's body, which was designed for birth. As Elizabeth Davis, writes: “One of the hallmarks of midwifery care is trauma-free, tear-free birth.” Proper birth positioning, as well as perineal support by using hot compresses and oil massages make a world of difference. Difficulties in baby's head passing out of mama's canal are usually caused by the obstetrical practices of poor pushing position. Being on one's back, or the typical “knees to chest” semi-reclining position make baby's descent



difficult and puts onerous pressure on the perineal tissues. A squat/vertical position is an optimal birth position (hands and knees position is good for large babies or to resolve shoulder dystocia), and perineal support during the birth is a great help to allow the tissues to expand as they are designed to.

Things you can do to alleviate perineal trauma include perineal massage in the last month of pregnancy, birthing in water, perineal support during birth with warm compresses and olive oil/EPO massage, the use of Arnica throughout the labor, etc. But in the end, you may have some amount of perineal trauma and a healing process to undergo. Tears are possible. I tore a little during each birth and had some stitches (the first birth tear was likely due to prolonged and difficult pushing with poor positioning; the previously damaged perineal tissue tore in the same place during the subsequent births, which is not uncommon after a first tear).

Even without additional tissue trauma, you will be tender/sore for a couple weeks. Using seaweed (nori sheets torn into strips) on the perineum and into the vagina is very healing to the tissues. Arnica oil, calendula oil, lavender EO, plantain and comfrey speed healing. Use an herbal peri-wash of diluted comfrey tea or lavender flowers in warm water whenever you urinate...it really helps if you squirt the peri-wash over your perineum as you urinate...it reduces the burning pain by diluting the urine. A good perineal healing recipe is 7 oz. warm water, 2 Tb. witch hazel, 1 drop lavender EO, 1 drop patchouli EO. Using the essential oils for sitz baths will help to promote healing and alleviate pain. Finally, don't forget to resume your kegel exercises a day or so after the birth.

### Witch Hazel Pads

I LOVED my witch hazel pads. During my labor, my midwife went into the kitchen and prepared some maxi pads (the special "after birth" kind) by dousing them with witch hazel and putting them in the freezer. Voila! I had my perineum pads ready for action after the big show. You'll be wearing pads for some time after birth anyway, so you should definitely soak them in witch hazel and even freeze some...they are so soothing! And the natural astringent is, again, very healing and pain-relieving to the perineal area.

### Hemorrhoids

If you develop hemorrhoids from birth, the witch hazel works nicely to reduce their size and alleviate pain...you can make little pads with cotton rounds and "tuck" them into that "area." Other hemorrhoid remedies are apple cider vinegar (soak a cotton round ala the witch hazel pad method), my [HerbalAide Super Salve](#), oral homeopathic Kali Carb (any dose will work).

### Sore Nipples

Beware "new nursing nipples." There is often a break-in period when you begin breastfeeding, and your nipples can end up incredibly sore, cracked and may even bleed. This is one of the hard realities of life, but do not despair. The pain will pass. Do not give up. My nipples went through agony for the first couple weeks of breastfeeding; every time I nursed it felt like shards of glass were going through them...they bled and cracked and scabbed. I used Lansinoh lanolin

on the nipples and it did help to reduce excess trauma, so I would recommend having some on hand. Coconut oil is another help; Super Salve will alleviate pain and bring healing, but wipe it from your nipples before nursing. Let your nipples air out after nursing for 15-20 minutes, and never wash them with soap. Because breastmilk is full of healing properties, it can help to rub a few extra drops onto the nipple before air drying. Not every mama suffers such nipple trauma...just be prepared and plan to persevere through the trial; the pain does go away and the whole thing gets easier.

### Eat Your Placenta

Wow, that sounds crazy, right? Think again! Placental encapsulation is gaining popularity among the natural birth crowd, and the benefits are numerous...and they include combatting postpartum depression. The hormones you receive from ingesting your placenta will speed your recovery, physically and emotionally. They will help you produce breastmilk and get your uterus toned more quickly after birth. The concept of using a part of your body to support your body's functions really isn't that strange...the inner workings of your physiology do it every second of every day. [Ingesting your placenta is no more cannibalism than it is for your body to use (and then recreate) its own red blood cells.] I have watched our milk goats eat their own placenta after giving birth, and while I know we are not animals, I have realized the natural, instinctual wisdom of the animal and the health benefits she receives. We can, too, though we don't need to chow down on our raw placentas as soon as we birth it. You can learn how to encapsulate your placenta, or have it done for you. For more information, read these articles online: [The Benefits of Placental Encapsulation for Postpartum Healing](#) and [How to Encapsulate Your Placenta](#). My best friend gifted me with encapsulating my placenta after I birthed my third child. I can testify to the added benefits I received in healing and in avoiding the PPD I had suffered with my other births. PPD is an unfortunate side effect of living and birthing in modern endocrine-disrupted bodies. Our hormone profiles are not as vibrant as they should be...food, environmental toxins, stress, etc, complicate our hormone cascades. Suffering PPD after birth may be "normal" for modern women, but it makes a difficult transition into motherhood so much harder. There are herbs and other natural remedies that can help, but ingesting your placenta is the place to start.

### For Baby, post birth

- One of the best tips I was ever given was to coat baby's bum with a thin layer of olive oil for the first three to four days...during the "passing of meconium" stage. That stuff is the nastiest, stickiest tar you've ever seen come out of a living creature. Perhaps I exaggerate, but you will be thankful for the olive oil trick...cleaning baby's tush will be much easier.
- Babies sleep extremely well in the first couple of days...he'll sleep most of the time, as he should. But this is NOT the baby's normal pattern, it is the recovery period from the trauma of birth.
- Babies love to be swaddled, and it can increase sleep success. it can help to practice ahead of time...if you have a stuffed animal and receiving blankets, work on your swaddling technique before little squirmy one arrives.

- If you have a boy, you should know that circumcision is not medically necessary, nor is it widely recommended anymore. Most doctors will advise against it and most insurances won't pay for it. For more information, see <http://www.mothersagainstcirc.org/fleiss.html>.
- If your baby has colic, your baby has food sensitivities (most often caused by gut dysbiosis). This is a prevalent and serious malady in modern times. A baby can be "allergic" or sensitive to ANY food you eat...the particles pass through your breastmilk and irritate the sensitive child. Common offenders are dairy, corn, wheat, soy, nuts, eggs. Baby will experience great relief when you do an elimination diet to identify and avoid the offending foods. To heal the disfunction, you will need to pursue a gut healing protocol like GAPS.

### Nursing

It is crucial that you breastfeed your baby...it is God's perfect food for baby humans and there is no substitute that can provide the same level of physical nourishment and immune-boosting properties. Nursing is very important for a baby's physical and emotional development. Baby will find no comfort like that at mother's breast. You will bond with your baby and create a trust that cannot be accomplished by other means. Nursing provides relaxation and safe haven for baby and cures a world of "owwies;" it also gives "good feeling" hormonal releases to Mom. Breastmilk is not only the perfect nutrition for baby, but it also provides antibodies, creating a well-functioning immune system (nothing else will do this). Breastfeeding nourishes baby's brain, too, and will increase IQ. It is essential to nurse for at least a year to provide proper immunity and nutritional foundations, but the worldwide average standard is two years and I highly recommend that as a minimum. It is wise to delay solid foods until the end of baby's first year...there is no nutritional requirement before that for breastfed babies, and the delay can help to prevent food allergies/sensitivities that have become ubiquitous in our culture.

Establishing a good milk supply is vital. You want to nurse continuously (every 2 hours) around the clock for the first three days until your milk comes in...this will get a solid supply going. The first days you will produce colostrum, and baby needs every drop possible of that liquid gold, so nursing that way is good for him even if it's tiring for you. If you have difficulty establishing supply, there are herbs that can help. Once you're in a good nursing rhythm, you'll decide what works best for you, but DO NOT schedule feed. Breastmilk does not have the nutritional constituency to keep baby full for hours. It is digested very quickly and is carb heavy and protein light (relatively speaking), so nursing more often is required...demand feeding is natural and baby will come hard-wired with hunger and satiety cues. One related item: baby is born with a full tummy and won't need to nurse "to eat" for some hours, unless his stomach is suctioned, which is a terrible practice...it is one of the sad "routine procedures" in US hospitals that you have to demand they forego. So while baby won't necessarily be hungry, nursing upon birth is a common and natural reflexive response for baby...a soothing way to connect to mama and cope with the terrifying outside world. Directly after birth, put baby on your chest and give him a chance to hear your heartbeat, feel your skin, and breathe you in. He'll likely make his way to the mama milk.

Breastfeeding inabilities are rare; first-time moms may struggle with nursing, but with legitimate help and perseverance, those difficulties can be overcome. If you suffer a true physiological impediment that makes you unable to produce breastmilk, you can provide a nourishing, nontoxic formula by following the [WAPF recipe](#). Commercial formula, made either with soy or industrial pasteurized milk (as well as other adulterated synthetic ingredients), is not healthy and should be avoided.

I believe it is wise to space pregnancies at least two years apart. This allows the mother's body to re-establish its nutritional stores, which are depleted during pregnancy as the baby's body is built. It is crucial for the health of subsequent babies that you take this seriously. This nutritional building, however, requires proper diet and avoidance of pregnancy. The healthiest, drug-free, synthetic hormone-free way to achieve this is [natural family planning](#) using the ovulation/mucus method of fertility detection. This method can be used to either avoid or achieve pregnancy. One of the benefits of nursing on demand is natural child spacing. If you breastfeed exclusively, as often as baby desires, and you don't give any pacifiers or bottles (you feed and pacify only and always at breast), you will not begin your cycles again for some time. The timing varies from woman to woman, but the average is nine months to two years.

A final FYI regarding breastmilk...it is the most amazing substance...so much more than baby food! It will heal many things, including conjunctivitis, a common problem for newborns. Their little tear ducts get clogged sometimes and they get irritated, goopy eyes or "pink eye." Just squirt some breastmilk in the affected eye every hour for a day or so and watch the eye heal...works great and is far superior to antibiotic ointments. It has also cured ear infections, if you ever need to try it; garlic oil works wonders for that as well, but breastmilk is nicer. Breastmilk heals skin ailments, too. This liquid miracle isn't just a boon for babies...I've heard of moms using it for various infections and ailments, like strep throat, and I've used it for rashes, cuts, etc. My midwife friend loves to rattle off the facts about breastmilk and its wondrous healing properties and she always finishes with, "They're going to discover someday that breastmilk cures cancer!"

### Diapering

Cloth diapers are better for your baby and better for the environment, which in turn is better for human health. Some highlights on why you should use cloth diapers: You'll save a lot of money, you'll save baby's skin from diaper rash and baby's body from harmful chemicals, you'll keep tons of diapers out of landfills (diapers in landfills can cause ground water contamination, not to mention the waste involved), you won't be contributing to the manufacturing of disposable diapers, which contaminates our air and water with hormone-disrupting dioxin. The health problems associated with disposable diapers include male infertility, asthma, and exposure to dangerous chemicals like dioxin, sodium polyacrylate, tributyltin, and more than 40 others. Baby skin is more absorbent than adult skin, so babies are more susceptible to having those chemicals migrate into their organs and bloodstreams. For more information:

[Truth about Disposable Diapers](#)

## Disposable Diapers Exposed

### Diaper Facts

#### Coconut Oil

Coconut oil works wonders on stretch marks! Coconut oil is also full of healing properties (it's anti-microbial, anti-fungal, promotes cell regeneration, etc.....) and will help those perineal tissues to heal. Just slather it on whenever you like.

#### Final Thoughts

So much of being prepared to give birth is a mental game. Yes, labor is painful...it is real work. You must decide early in your pregnancy that you are going to birth naturally, no matter how it feels, how hard it is, how long it takes (unless there is a true emergency or safety issue to mother or baby...which is not common). It is similar to an athlete preparing for a triathlon or a climber preparing for Everest. Birth is your Everest. You must train physically, but you must train mentally...in your attitude. You must choose determination and fortitude. I would not try to conceal the truth from you...the pain of labor and birth is intense. But it is temporary and it will pass...it is a blip on the map of your life. You can give birth without medical intervention. Millions of women have done it since God made mankind...make your choice now.

And when baby arrives, remember...a mother's instincts are Divine. Listen to your inner voice. A mother knows her child better than anyone else. Do not let some "expert" tell you that you need his help to properly care for your baby/child. Do not underestimate your ability to know how to mother. If you desire help, seek it on your terms. Traditional wisdom is largely ignored in our culture, but it is still available and holds the keys to successful child rearing. Keeping baby healthy is not complicated but requires some knowledge of natural health and living. The best start for building a healthy baby who will become a healthy adult is to breastfeed, be sensitive to the signs of allergies (food allergens do transmit through breastmilk), sleep with your baby, and avoid vaccination. There is a plethora of fantastic information available on the web and in print, so I'll provide a few resources that I believe are worthwhile.

#### Book/Reading List

Pushed by Jennifer Block

The Thinking Woman's Guide to a Better Birth by Henci Goer

Gentle Birth Choices by Barbara Harper

Obstetric Myths vs. Research Realities by Goer

Born in the USA by Marsden Wagner

Anything by Robbie Davis-Floyd

Having a Baby, Naturally by Peggy O'Mara

Ina May's Guide to Childbirth by Ina May Gaskin

Essential Exercises for the Childbearing Year by Elizabeth Noble

Active Birth by Janet Balaskas

Natural Childbirth the Bradley Way by Susan McCutcheon  
Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth, and Your Baby's First Year Miranda Castro  
The Nursing Mother's Companion Kathleen Huggins  
Honoring Our Cycles: Natural Family Planning Workbook by Katie Singer  
Taking Charge of Your Fertility by Toni Weshler  
Your Fertility Signals by Merryl Winstein  
Breastfeeding and Natural Child Spacing by Sheila Kippley  
The Baby Book by William Sears  
Take Charge of Your Child's Health by George Wootan  
Naturally Healthy Babies and Children by Aviva Romm  
The ABC Herbal by Steven Horne  
How to Raise a Healthy Child In Spite of Your Doctor by Robert Mendelsohn

"The Case Against Circumcision," Mothering Magazine  
"Avoiding the Cascade of Interventions," Mothering Magazine  
"The Hidden Risk of Epidurals," Mothering Magazine  
Cascade of Interventions at The Birth Instinct blog  
Information and Resources about Interventions

Websites:

<http://spinningbabies.com/>

MUST READ for all pregnant moms...resources and techniques for correcting malpositioned babies.

<http://www.gentlebirth.org/index.html>

(fabulous resources and articles on all things natural pregnancy and birth)

<http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/330/7505/1416>

(outcomes of planned homebirths study)

[http://www.susunweed.com/Article\\_Pregnancy\\_Problems.htm](http://www.susunweed.com/Article_Pregnancy_Problems.htm)

(beneficial herbs for pregnancy)

<http://www.safeminds.org/>

(vaccine news/info site)

<http://thinktwice.com/>

(vaccine info)

<http://www.gval.com/>

(vaccine info)



<http://www.russellblaylockmd.com/>

(Under the Information link there are articles by this neurosurgeon on why vaccines damage the brain)

<http://www.mercola.com/article/vaccines/references.htm>

(go to [www.mercola.com](http://www.mercola.com) and search vaccines for a numerous articles)

<http://www.cotlife2000.com/>

(this information is very important to understanding and avoiding one of the main causes of SIDS, which is toxicity from heavy metals in mattresses)

<http://www.bulkherbstore.com/>

(herbal healing and healthy living information)

<http://www.mothering.com/>

(Mothering magazine...a cornucopia of pregnancy/birth/baby information)

<http://www.westonaprice.org/children/nourish-baby.html>

(excellent nutrition information...check out the other articles at this site)

<http://www.diaperpin.com/home.asp>

(cloth diaper info and forum for reviews, buying/selling, etc.)

[www.diaperswappers.com](http://www.diaperswappers.com)

(cloth diaper trading forum...discussions, info and a forum for buying/selling/trading used diapers)

[www.diapersafari.com](http://www.diapersafari.com)

(good articles section about cloth diapering)