

Vaginal Delivery

A vaginal delivery occurs when a baby is delivered through the vagina or birth canal. When you are completely dilated to 10 centimeters, your labor nurse will help you to begin pushing. You will push in a reclined sitting position in your labor bed. With each contraction you will bear down in your pelvic area like you are having a bowel movement. You will continue to push until the baby's head is low in the birth canal.

When it is time for delivery, the bottom portion of your labor bed is removed, and your legs are placed in stirrups. Sterile cloths called drapes may be placed over your legs and abdomen. As you continue to push, your doctor will help to ease the baby from the birth canal. Sometimes an incision is made in the perineal area to provide more space for the passage of the baby's head. This is called an *episiotomy*. Your doctor will determine at the time of delivery whether this will be needed.

The doctor will place the baby on your upper abdomen after delivery. Your coach or partner will have the option to cut the umbilical cord at that time. The doctor will assist with this. After you have been able to see the baby for a short time, the nurses will usually place him or her in a baby bed next to yours. This special bed has a warming light over it to help maintain the baby's temperature. The nurses will perform a complete assessment of the baby, including vital signs, measurements, and weight. Antibiotic eye drops will be placed in the baby's eyes to prevent infection. The baby will also receive an injection of vitamin K which will help the baby's blood to clot properly. Sometimes babies will have breathing or other health problems after delivery. In these instances, the baby may be taken to the NICU (neonatal intensive care unit) for immediate attention and special care.

The placenta or afterbirth is usually delivered between 5 and 20 minutes after the delivery of your baby. Sutures will be used to repair your episiotomy site or any vaginal/perineal tears that may have occurred during the vaginal delivery of your baby. These sutures will dissolve as your perineum heals. You will have heavy bleeding after your vaginal delivery and will need to wear a large sanitary pad for several days. Sometimes ice packs, steroid foam, and anesthetic spray are used to ease the swelling and discomfort from vaginal delivery. Tucks pads may also be used to help reduce swelling and hemorrhoids.

Soon after delivery, you and your baby will be transferred to a postpartum room where you will stay until you are discharged home. Most women stay in the hospital for one to two days after a vaginal delivery. You will normally return to our office for your postpartum check-up six weeks after delivery.