



## Nurturing Your Journey

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A GUIDE FROM MY DOULA DAWN

# How to Advocate for *Yourself* *in Pregnancy & Birth*

One of the biggest regrets parents have after birth is not speaking up for themselves. Many people go along with what they're told — only to realize later they had options they didn't even know about. This guide teaches you how to advocate for yourself, ask the right questions, and ensure you're an active participant in every decision.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

- ★ Your rights in pregnancy & birth
- ★ The BRAIN Method — 5 questions that change everything
- ★ Common interventions & what to ask before saying yes
- ★ 5 powerful ways to advocate in the birth room
- ★ Scripts and language you can use in the moment

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

# Understanding Your Rights in Pregnancy & Birth

Your birth team works for you — not the other way around. You are an active participant in every decision made about your body and your baby. Most parents don't realize how much power they actually have in the birth room. Here's what you need to know.

## ♦ YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- ♦ Say "yes" or "no" to any procedure or intervention — even routine ones.
- ♦ Ask for more time before making a decision (unless it's a true emergency).
- ♦ Decline routine interventions like cervical checks or IV fluids if they aren't medically necessary in your situation.
- ♦ Change providers if yours isn't respecting your choices — even during pregnancy.
- ♦ Have a birth support person with you, including a doula, in most hospital settings.
- ♦ Ask for a second opinion at any point during your care.
- ♦ Request a different nurse or provider if you feel unsupported or dismissed.
- ♦ Know the risks, benefits, and alternatives before agreeing to any intervention.

♦ **Dawn's Tip:** *If something doesn't feel right, trust that instinct. You can always say "I need a few minutes to think about this" or "I'd like to speak with my doula/partner before deciding." That pause can change everything.*

## ♦ KNOW YOUR RIGHTS IN PRACTICE

### If you're feeling pressured:

- ♦ Ask for a few minutes to talk with your support person.
- ♦ Say: "I hear what you're saying — can I have time to consider my options?"
- ♦ Unless it's a true emergency, you have time to ask questions.

### If you feel dismissed:

- ♦ Repeat yourself clearly and calmly: "I would like to discuss this further."
- ♦ Ask your doula or partner to speak on your behalf.
- ♦ Request to speak with a patient advocate or charge nurse.

## ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

## The BRAIN Method

When a provider suggests an intervention — induction, Pitocin, breaking your water, or a C-section — don't just say yes automatically. Use the BRAIN method to make sure you have all the information you need. These five questions work in any situation, at any point in your pregnancy, labor, or postpartum care.

|          |                     |                                                                             |
|----------|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>B</b> | <b>Benefits</b>     | What are the benefits of this intervention for me and my baby right now?    |
| <b>R</b> | <b>Risks</b>        | What are the risks — both of doing this and of <i>not</i> doing it?         |
| <b>A</b> | <b>Alternatives</b> | Are there other options we haven't discussed? What else could we try first? |
| <b>I</b> | <b>Intuition</b>    | What does my gut tell me? What feels right for me and my baby?              |
| <b>N</b> | <b>Nothing</b>      | What happens if we do nothing and wait? How long can we safely wait?        |

♦ **Dawn's Tip:** Many interventions are optional — and asking questions doesn't make you difficult. It makes you informed. The way you phrase questions matters. Instead of "Do I have to do this?" try **"What are my options?"** That one shift changes the entire tone of the conversation.

### ♦ HOW TO USE THE BRAIN METHOD IN THE MOMENT

#### When your provider suggests induction:

- ♦ "What are the specific benefits of inducing now versus waiting?"
- ♦ "What are the risks of induction for me and my baby?"
- ♦ "What would happen if we waited another 24–48 hours?"

#### When a C-section is suggested:

- ♦ "Is this an emergency, or do I have time to ask questions?"
- ♦ "What alternatives are available right now?"
- ♦ "Can I have delayed cord clamping and skin-to-skin even with a C-section?"

## COMMON INTERVENTIONS

## What to Ask Before Saying Yes

Understanding the most common birth interventions — and having the right questions ready — means you'll never feel caught off guard in the moment. Not all interventions are unnecessary. The key is making sure you understand the *why* before you say yes.

### 1. Induction *Starting labor with medication or breaking your water*

**ASK:**

- ✦ Is this medically necessary right now, or can I wait?
- ✦ What are the risks of inducing now versus waiting for labor to start naturally?
- ✦ Can I try natural methods to encourage labor first?

### 2. Epidural & Pain Relief *Medication to manage labor pain*

**ASK:**

- ✦ What are my pain relief options besides an epidural?
- ✦ If I get an epidural, how might it affect my labor progress and ability to move?
- ✦ Can I still change positions and stay mobile after getting one?

### 3. Continuous vs. Intermittent Monitoring *Tracking baby's heart rate during labor*

**ASK:**

- ✦ Can I have intermittent monitoring so I can move freely during labor?
- ✦ Is continuous monitoring medically necessary in my specific situation?

### 4. Pushing & Delivery Positions *How and when you push your baby out*

**ASK:**

- ✦ Can I push in a position other than flat on my back?
- ✦ How long do I have to push before other interventions are suggested?

### 5. C-Section Recommendation *Surgical delivery of your baby*

**ASK:**

- ✦ Is this an emergency, or do I have time to ask questions and consider options?
- ✦ What happens if I wait a little longer?
- ✦ Can I request delayed cord clamping and immediate skin-to-skin even with a C-section?

✦ **Dawn's Tip:** Not all interventions are bad — some are absolutely necessary and lifesaving. The key is understanding the risks, benefits, and alternatives so you can make a truly informed choice. You are never obligated to say yes without information.

## IN THE BIRTH ROOM

## 5 Powerful Ways to Advocate for Yourself

1

**Bring a Doula or Well-Informed Support Person**

Having a doula reduces C-sections, unnecessary interventions, and birth trauma. Even if you don't have a doula, a well-prepared partner can advocate for you — but they need to know how. Brief them on the BRAIN method and your birth preferences before labor starts.

2

**Communicate Your Birth Preferences Clearly**

Write a simple birth plan — one page, bullet points. Use "if/then" statements to show flexibility while maintaining your preferences. Give copies to your provider, your nurse, and your support team so everyone is on the same page.

3

**If You're Feeling Pressured, Ask for a Minute**

Unless it's a true emergency, you can ask for time before agreeing to anything. Try: *"I hear what you're saying — can I have a few minutes to talk this over with my partner?"* Most providers will say yes. If they won't, that tells you something important.

4

**Trust Your Gut**

If something feels wrong or unnecessary, speak up. Your instincts matter. Your provider should respect your concerns, not dismiss them. You have the right to ask questions until you feel genuinely informed — not just told what to do.

5

**Know That You Can Say No — Or Ask for an Alternative**

You do not have to accept routine interventions just because they're common. If you're unsure, ask *"Can I wait a little longer?"* or *"What are the alternatives?"* Your birth team works for you — not the other way around.

♦ **Remember:** *The families who feel best about their births aren't always the ones who had everything go according to plan. They're the ones who felt heard, respected, and in control of their decisions. You deserve that. Every single time.*

**Work with Dawn:** Visit [mydouladawn.com](https://mydouladawn.com) to book a free 15-minute call or get the Newborn Sleep Blueprint.