



## Choosing Your Maternity Caregiver

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Hello, I'm Sarah Buckley and welcome to Gentle Natural Birth.

In this video, we are talking about choosing your maternity caregiver.

No doubt you will have given some thought to this already, and many of you may have chosen your caregiver—maybe even before you became pregnant. Congratulations on your forethought!

### Keep an open mind

However, even if you have made a decision, I encourage you to watch this video with an open mind.

What matters most is that you choose a caregiver who is right for you, who is in alignment with your philosophy and expectations, so that you get your needs met from pregnancy right through labour and birth, and with you and your baby postpartum.

In particular, you do not want to get to the end of pregnancy and realize that you and your caregiver have different ideas, and your wishes and plans may be compromised.

Please know that I'm not suggesting that there is one right type of maternity caregiver who will suit every pregnant woman. I trust that you can make the decision that is right for you, given all the information you require, and trusting your own knowing of yourself, your baby and your own unique needs.

### Who do you feel safe with?

Ultimately it's about who you feel safe with, and who you will be able to trust with your body and your baby in labour and birth.

You can get an idea about this from your own feelings when you see your maternity caregiver.

For example

- *Do you feel that you can trust this person and what they say?*
- *Do they seem trusting of you, and what you say?*
- *Do you feel more confident in your body and your baby when you see them?*
- *Do you feel happier and more joyful about your pregnancy?*



From my point of view, these aspects are more important than the actual type of maternity care provider.

## You are the most important caregiver

Before we talk more about choosing your caregiver, I want to suggest one more thing. I want to suggest that, in fact, you are the most important caregiver for yourself and your baby.

You are the only one present 24/7 and available to meet your needs and those of your baby. And it is what you do for yourself during pregnancy, I believe, that will have the biggest impact on your experience, your baby's experience, and even on longer-term health and wellbeing for both of you

I'm not saying this to make you feel guilty, or to give you another whole job to do. But I do want you to know that the resources that you invest in your pregnancy and birth, including your time and love, will have a bigger impact than at any other time in your life—your wedding included!

This sounds very serious, and in some ways it is, but it's also fun and joyful.

As we discussed in Video One, it's really about doing what feels good, what relaxes you, and gives you joy, in the context of what is healthy and wholesome.

- *Do what is wholesome*
- *Feels good*
- *Relaxes you*
- *Gives you joy*

## My prescription

My suggestion is that you make a list of these things—what is wholesome, feels good, what relaxes you and gives you joy—and make sure you do at least one thing for yourself every day.

And that's my medical prescription for the whole of your pregnancy.

(Please let your partner and family know this too!)

Your maternity caregiving team

Let's talk more about the rest of your maternity caregiving team. Pregnancy is such an important and powerful time, and you will be going through so many changes, so I actually recommend that you consider having a team to meet your needs at this time.



For example, you could have one or more of the following:

- *a nutritionist or naturopath to talk about your diet and nutrition*
- *a physical therapist, chiropractor, osteopath or yoga teacher to help care for your changing body*
- *a midwife or OB for pregnancy and birth care*
- *a counsellor, psychologist or good friend to provide emotional support*
- *a doula to support you in labour*

You certainly don't need everyone on this list, and some of these needs can be met through your own reading and research, or with the help of your friends, partner, and community.

What is important, again, is to choose a support team that you feel aligned with, and happy and confident in their presence.

## How much technology?

In choosing your primary maternity caregiver, you want to be really aware and conscious about your own philosophy, needs and expectations.

In Video Four (Making Wise Decisions, Part One) I suggested that you sit down with yourself, and ideally your partner, and talk about what your priorities are in parenting, what you need, and what really matters to you. This is a great foundation from which to choose your primary maternity caregiver as well.

Now I'm going to use some simplistic generalizations here, to help with clarity. Just know that maternity caregivers are people with their own philosophies and maybe idiosyncrasies, so it's a little simplistic to categorise.

But to help you decide, let's say that there are three different categories, or really philosophies, that you will come across. Let's call these high, medium and low technology:

- *High technology*
- *Medium technology*
- *Low technology*

## High technology

High-technology oriented caregivers will usually work in a high-technology setting—a hospital with ready access to maternity care drugs and interventions.



They strongly believe that technology is necessary for safety, and probably use drugs and interventions routinely.

High-technology orientated caregivers are likely to have high rates of inductions and caesareans in their practice.

This is the choice to make if you are wanting this style of birth, which is about using a lot of interventions to prevent any chance of complications for mother and baby.

However, be aware that all of these drugs and interventions can have their own potential complications. See the Resources list for more information about this.

You may also need this type of caregiver if you have complications in your pregnancy, in which case it is great to have someone with a high level of skill and expertise with the necessary technology for you and your baby.

## Medium technology

A medium-technology caregiver may be a physician, especially a family physician, or often a midwife. They may work in a hospital, especially a small or rural hospital or a birth centre within a hospital.

Medium-technology caregivers may have a low-technology philosophy but have rules and regulations related to the institution that raises their use of interventions.

If you are making this choice, I suggest you ask about any rules and regulations that may impact your choices. For example, requirements for tests and scans, and for interventions in situations such as Group B Strep, and going overdue.

## Low technology

Low-technology caregivers are usually midwives, and the lowest technology setting is obviously a homebirth.

Low-technology caregivers tend to trust the natural processes of pregnancy, labour and birth, and to intervene only when there is a very good reason. Generally, they are flexible and able to accommodate your choices, but do check whether they have rules and regulations governing their practice.

## Begin with lower technology

Now, I do have a recommendation around this. As with everything, please filter my information and recommendations through your own knowing of yourself, you baby, and your family.



My recommendation is that, if you and your baby are healthy, that you begin care with a low or medium-technology caregiver. You can always move up to the next level if needed, but it is very hard to move to a lower technology level of care.

In addition, lower-technology options increase the chance that you will experience the benefits of a physiologic birth for you and your baby. These benefits include a natural euphoria or ecstasy that can last for days (or even years!) and gives an ideal start to breastfeeding and bonding. See the Resources for more about this.

### Which category?

If you want to know which category your chosen caregiver fits into, I suggest you ask them their rates of induction and caesarean.

Again, to overly simplify, a low-technology caregiver is likely to have rates of caesarean and induction below 15%, maybe even below 10%.

A medium technology caregiver may have rates between 15% and 25% or so.

And a high-technology caregiver may have rates over 25-30%—maybe even 50%.

I highly recommend that you request this information about interventions and caesarean rates from your maternity caregiver.

### Consider a doula

Whatever level of technology you choose, I'm going to make another recommendation.

I suggest that you research, and consider budgeting for, doula care in labour and birth. Having your own doula will not only enhance your experience of birth, but will also reduce the chances of major interventions including epidurals and caesareans.

Because of these advantages, I would rate hiring your own doula as one of the most effective uses of your resources and budget, especially if you are birthing with a high-technology caregiver.

If resources are tight, I suggest that you get creative. For example, you could ask people to sponsor your doula care instead of buying gifts.

See the Resources for more information about the benefits of doulas.

So I hope this has given you some food for thought and helped you with this important decision choosing your maternity caregiver.

Please remember to check out the Resources list as well.

Wishing you power and pleasure in your pregnancy.