

INFORMED CONSENT

In a hospital, the forms you sign or initial comprise informed consent. You're already ahead of the curve since you are taking additional steps to inform yourselves. That's the most important step you can take. Some things to remember:

- ★ You always have the right to say no.
- ★ You always have the right to ask questions until you understand.
- ★ You always have the right to a second opinion (Remember though, most people do not like to be second-guessed. The trade-off for a second opinion might be a perturbed staff.)
- ★ Sign only those forms you understand. ASK!
- ★ You have the right to refuse any procedure, even if you have signed a consent form. However, I suggest that you make a note of common procedures to which you do not consent. The best example would be an episiotomy. You may wish to write on the consent form or on your birth plan: I do not consent to an episiotomy.
- ★ Communication is essential. Ask open-ended questions. Why? How? What if? When? How often?
- ★ Will your doctor sign a birth plan? Sometimes, signed birth plans are considered orders. Will your doctor's backups respect the signed plan as orders?
- ★ Remember that the birth you are planning may be off the beaten path, not the cookie-cutter birth that most doctors and nurses are accustomed to doing. Some caregivers may feel that it is unfair to do something for you that they've not done for another patient. Get the staff on your side. Come in under their radar. My doula, Sally Head, always says "Be pleasantly immovable."