My Birth Experience at Mercy
Giving birth is one of the most life changing events you will ever experience.

A birth plan serves as a communication tool between you, your physician and the nursing staff. It helps you communicate what is most important to you during your baby’s birth and hospital stay. The birth process is unique to each woman, and it can be unpredictable. Expect that you may need to alter your birth plan if the health of you or your baby becomes a concern. Rest assured: You can trust our team to honor your wishes while protecting you and your baby.

Your Labor Support Team
You want a strong support system with you as you progress through labor and birth. Expectant moms often include a variety of people including the baby’s father, their mother, a sister or a close friend as part of their labor support team. Your physician and the nurses at Mercy are an important part of your team as well. Together they will keep you informed of your labor progress and answer questions or concerns you may have along the way. You may also want to consider hiring a doula to be with you during labor and birth. Doulas are experienced companions who provide women and their partners with emotional, physical and informational support throughout the different phases of pregnancy, labor and the postpartum period.

Comfort Measures
Listen to your body. It will give you signals that help guide you into positions that provide comfort as well as speed up the labor process. We can provide a variety of comfort measures to help create a peaceful, relaxing labor environment. You may adjust the room lighting and temperature to make yourself comfortable. All rooms have a TV with DVD player and auxiliary jack for MP3 players. Please feel free to bring other items for your comfort. You may wear your own clothing if desired.

This booklet provides information about labor and birth practices at Mercy and includes an optional birth plan that you can complete prior to your baby’s birth. Discuss your birth plan with your physician during a prenatal visit and present it to your labor nurse when you arrive at the hospital.
Monitoring Your Contractions and Baby’s Heart Rate
We monitor your baby’s heart rate, which is a good indication of how well your baby is tolerating the labor process. We follow the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologist (ACOG) recommendations for monitoring your contractions and baby’s heart rate. This includes a minimum of 30 minutes when you first arrive in labor and birth. Our fetal monitors are wireless, allowing women to be out of bed walking or in the tub while still monitoring the baby’s heart rate. Continuous monitoring is appropriate if your baby’s heart rate is unstable, if you are receiving medications to stimulate your labor, or if you have pregnancy complications.

Nutrition
We encourage women to sip clear liquids as tolerated during their labor. This includes ice chips, water, soda, broth and gelatin. Women who have a planned cesarean birth will be instructed not to eat or drink for several hours prior to the surgery. Please follow your physician’s recommendations regarding food and fluid intake prior to a cesarean birth or labor induction.

Intravenous Access (IV)
For the safety of you and your baby, most physicians prefer IV access to provide fluids, medications or if you plan to have epidural anesthesia. An IV will not limit your ability to move around.

Pain Management
Having a baby is hard work. There are many ways to decrease your pain during labor and birth. Some women prefer to go without or delay receiving pain medicine by trying natural comfort measures first. If you plan to use epidural anesthesia as an option please visit obepidural.com to view an educational video and complete forms several weeks prior to your baby’s birth. You may also call OB Anesthesia Associates, Inc., at 314-469-6800.

Bag of Water Breaking
Your baby grows inside you in a bag filled with amniotic fluid that provides warmth and protection from the outside world. For some women the bag of water breaks on its own as a first signal that labor has begun. Your physician may recommend artificially breaking your bag of water to help labor progress. Prior to your hospitalization please have a discussion with your physician about when it is appropriate to break your bag of water.
**Induction of Labor**

The last few weeks of pregnancy can be physically and emotionally draining for some pregnant women. However, unless medically necessary for the health of mom or baby it is not recommended that labor be induced until you have completed at least 39 weeks of pregnancy. This will help insure that your baby is mature enough to be born. If it becomes medically necessary to induce your labor please have a discussion with your physician about methods of induction.

**Pushing Preferences and Birth**

Your labor nurse will assist you with a variety of pushing positions. Most women give birth in bed using an upright sitting position.

**Episiotomy**

Episiotomy refers to an incision that is made between the mother’s vaginal opening and rectum to allow more room for the birth of the baby. Although the practice of routine episiotomy is no longer common it may be medically necessary in some cases. Prior to your labor please have a discussion with your physician about episiotomy.

**Cutting the Umbilical Cord**

Many labor partners enjoy being involved by cutting the baby’s umbilical cord immediately following the birth. Your physician will provide guidance when the cord is cut.

**Cord Blood Collection and Donation**

New parents have the option of having their baby’s cord blood collected immediately following the birth. Cord blood can be used to treat many life threatening illnesses including leukemia, metabolic disorders, genetic disorders or immune deficiencies. Some parents choose to pay a fee to a private company to have the cord blood stored for their own use. Many other parents donate their baby’s cord blood for public use. It is important to arrange for a private or public donation prior to your baby’s birth. For public donation of your baby’s cord blood, contact the St. Louis Cord Blood Bank at 314-268-2787 or 888-453-2673.
Immediate Care of My Baby Following Birth
We strive to keep healthy moms and babies together. Consider having your baby placed skin-to-skin on your chest immediately following birth. Your baby will stay warm and the instinct to find the breast and initiate nursing will occur naturally. If you prefer, your baby can be cleaned, swaddled and then placed in your arms for bonding. Your nurse will stay close-by to monitor your baby’s breathing, heart rate, color and temperature.

Feeding My Baby
Babies are very awake and alert the first hour following birth. This is a great time to start breastfeeding. Our registered nurses are prepared to help you with breastfeeding and will contact one of our lactation consultants if you need additional help during your hospital stay. The best way to learn your baby’s feeding cues is to have her exclusively in your room. If you do not plan to breastfeed, please let us know if you have a formula brand preference for your baby.

Administration of Antibiotic Eye Drops
The state of Missouri requires that all babies receive antibiotic drops in the eyes shortly after birth to prevent the chance of eye infection in the newborn period. In most cases this is done within the first hour after birth.

Circumcision
Circumcision is a common surgical procedure performed on baby boys prior to discharge from the hospital. This involves surgical removal of the foreskin which covers the tip of the penis. Your obstetrician can help prepare you for what to expect and answer your questions about circumcision. All baby boys receive anesthesia prior to the circumcision procedure.

Mother-Baby Unit
Following a two-hour recovery, healthy moms and babies are transferred together to the Mother-Baby Unit. Babies are not admitted to the Full Term Nursery unless there is a health concern. We encourage new parents to keep their baby with them as much as possible. Rooming in helps new parents feel comfortable with feeding, newborn care and learning their baby’s normal behavior patterns. Our nurses are happy to assist with any baby care and teaching needed before going home. You can also watch the Newborn Channel® #25 for mom and baby care education.
New parents may introduce their baby to family and friends any time. Everyone who visits should wash their hands before holding the baby. We observe naptime from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. each day to allow time for our moms and babies to get some extra rest.

**Completing Your Birth Plan**
Attending a labor and birth preparation program will provide the knowledge you need to create a meaningful birth plan. Please take some time to complete your Mercy Birth Plan and be sure and share it with your private physician several weeks or months prior to your baby’s birth.

**You may find these websites helpful:**
- **Mercy Maternity** (mercy.net/stlmaternity)
- **Mercy Women’s and Children’s Education** (mercy.net/stlclasses)
- **American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists** (acog.org)
- **Association of Women’s Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses** (awhonn.org)
- **Childbirth Connection** (childbirthconnection.org)
- **Doulas of Greater St. Louis** (doulasofgreaterstlouis.com)
- **Lamaze International** (lamaze.org)
- **March of Dimes** (marchofdimes.org)
- **OB Anesthesia Associates, Inc.** (obepidural.com)
- **St. Louis Cord Blood Donation** (slcbb.org)
Each birth is unique, every baby a miracle.