

Questions to Ask Health-Care Providers

When you interview health-care providers, refer to a written list of the questions you want to ask, including the following:

- I just want to double-check my information: Is this a solo or group practice? (Things sometimes change between the time you get information and when you sign up.)
- Are you still participating in the health care program _____? (Fill in the blank with the name of your insurance company.)
- What are your office hours? (If you work all day and there are no evening or Saturday office hours you can cross this name off your list.)
- What hospitals are you affiliated with?
- Do these hospitals have a neonatal intensive care unit? (This is a special nursery for babies born with medical complications. It is vital for women with high-risk pregnancies.)
- Does the hospital allow the baby to room with the mother? Some new moms think this is important; others would prefer having the time to recuperate without their babies next to them. Either way is fine; just find out what the hospital offers.
- Can my husband be present at my monthly exams? If this is important to you, find out now! And pay attention to the tone in the person's voice when he or she answers. If a "yes" sounds more like a "if you're going to be a pain about it and I have no other choice," that will tell you to keep looking.
- Will my husband be welcomed in the labor and delivery room? (Some practitioners welcome new fathers; others merely tolerate them.)
- Do you encourage natural childbirth or anesthetized childbirth? (The right answer here should say something about this being your choice and preference, not the doctor's.)
- What is your position on pain relief during delivery? Some doctors withhold pain medicine until the woman demands it; others give it freely. Ask.
- What is your opinion about cesarean section deliveries? What is your (or your group's) cesarean rate?
- Do you encourage vaginal birth even if I've previously had a cesarean?

- What is your group's induction rate? (The rate at which labor is forced or "inducted.")
- What is your group's VBAC rate? (The number of people in your practice who have cesarean births and then go on to have subsequent vaginal births.)
- How do you support breast-feeding women?