

The below is transcribed from *Ask the Mercy OBs and Midwives Anything: Pregnancy, Birthing & Becoming Parents*, a community Q+A session with the experts held 4-7-2016

Is there valet parking for dad's to be?

Yes. For families delivering at Mercy Hospital, there is free valet parking for dads or partners.

What is the arrival process like when a woman shows up already having contractions?

Moms will be taken directly to the Labor and Delivery unit on the 4th floor, where they will be evaluated by a Labor and Delivery nurse and midwife or OB physician to determine the status of their labor. Specially trained Laborists (OB physicians) are available 24/7 to monitor each patient's progress and provide needed care until their OB or midwife arrives.

Can you describe a typical VBAC experience? What can I generally expect?

Up to 85% of women can have a vaginal birth after a cesarean section. If you are planning to have a VBAC, your doctor will speak with you prior to your anticipated delivery. She/he will evaluate several factors, including your overall health, to determine if it is safe for you and your baby to deliver vaginally. Your doctor will counsel you about the potential risks and benefits of a vaginal delivery after a previous cesarean birth and obtain your written consent to proceed with a VBAC. Your contraction pattern, as well as your baby's heartbeat, will be carefully monitored throughout your labor by an electronic fetal monitor. All necessary precautions will be taken and your birthing team will be prepared for any situation that may arise throughout your labor and delivery.

Can I have a vaginal delivery after weight loss surgery?

Your provider and birth team will work closely with you to determine the safest way to deliver your baby taking into consideration your current health status, the health of your baby and various other factors.

Can siblings come visit at the hospital?

Definitely!

What is a "Level 2" NICU? Does this mean my baby can be transferred to another hospital if circumstances require it?

Every basic birthing hospital provides Level 1 care, which means that it is equipped to deliver and care for babies born at 35 weeks or more. Babies born at less than 35 weeks may need to be transferred to a hospital that offers a higher level of neonatal care. Mercy Hospital offers a Level 2 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU), staffed by neonatologists and neonatal nurse practitioners who can care for babies born as early as 32 weeks. Catholic Health also offers a Level 3 NICU at Sisters Hospital that can care for babies born earlier than 32 weeks. Depending on the care your baby needs, he or she may need to be transferred to another hospital, including Children's Hospital, for specialized neonatal care.

What is the 'golden hour'?

This is a term we use for the first hour of your baby's life... something so precious, it is more valuable than gold. The "golden hour" is when you and your baby meet and an important time for family bonding to begin. We actively encourage moms and their partners to take the first hour of your baby's life and place the baby on your bare skin, covered with blankets. The intimacy of that first hour of your baby's life, skin on skin, is not only a special time for you and your family, it offers many physiological benefits, including normalizing your baby's temperature, heart beat and stress levels. For new mothers, the baby will start identifying you as their mom and the hormones released in your body from this experience will help expel your placenta. It may also be the perfect time to begin breastfeeding your baby for the first time.

What should be on a birth plan?

Please talk with your midwife or your physician to develop your birth plan. At Mercy Hospital, we offer family-centered care and do most of the things many moms want in their birth plans including minimal interventions (unless medically necessary); use of birthing tools like a Jacuzzi, birthing balls, bars and peanuts to aid in pain management and comfort;; natural deliveries; and alternative positioning, including squatting, standing, hands and knees, etc. We have the lowest C-section rate in the region and overall our episiotomy rate is below national averages and goals. Please feel free to bring in a birth plan as a guideline for your desires and be sure you to talk with your provider in advance and have taken one of our childbirth preparation courses. You will likely find that Mercy Hospital already offers most of the things you want as part of your birth plan

Can you labor in different positions?

YES! At Mercy Hospital, we have many birthing options and experienced nurses that will help you labor in whatever position you are most comfortable! We have classes that describe the various birth positions and can help you find the one that works best for your so you can have the most comfortable birth experience possible.

Are you able to eat and drink during labor?

Your provider will determine whether you can eat during labor. Many moms feel nauseous during labor, so they prefer liquids over solid food. With their provider's approval, low risk mothers who are progressing through labor well, are generally able to eat a light snack to help keep their energy up.

How many people can be present during the birth?

We are open to having as many people as can comfortably fit in our Labor and Delivery rooms present for the birth. It is important to remember that we have a full team to help you and your baby when delivery is imminent. Our Mother-Baby nurse will be present to assist your L&D nurse by assessing your baby's transition to life outside of your body and to begin the "Golden Hour" for family bonding. If needed, our neonatal team and/or another doctor or midwife may be called in to assist with your delivery. If that happens, it may be necessary to ask your friends or other family members, except for your birth partner, to leave the room if extra space is needed to care for you or your baby.

If the delivery is going smoothly, can the partner "catch" the baby?

This is a discussion to have with your doctor or midwife. While most providers encourage active involvement from the birth partner (cutting the umbilical cord, labor support, etc.) there are many factors to consider during the moment of delivery and different providers have different preferences.

What is the vaginal birth rate of Mercy Hospital?

Nearly 70% of all deliveries at Mercy Hospital are vaginal births. For midwife deliveries, the vaginal birth rate is 92%, with 8% of midwifery patients requiring C-sections, which are performed by physicians who work closely with the midwives.

Do you allow immediate skin to skin contact and if so, for how long?

Yes we do, even following C-sections! You can physically bond with your baby for at least an hour or more after delivery depending on your personal circumstances. We can do many of the assessments needed to check the health status of your baby while he/she is lying on your chest. We will need to weigh your baby to do initial measurements, but if you prefer non-separation immediately after you deliver your baby, please let our staff know.

Can you give birth in the Jacuzzi tubs at Mercy? If not, why?

Unlike special birthing tubs, which have built-in safety features, the Jacuzzi tubs at Mercy Hospital are for comfort only and not designed for birthing. Many moms find the warm water comforting during labor, however, when labor has progressed sufficiently, moms come out of the tub to safely deliver their baby.

What is the induction rate at Mercy Hospital?

Mercy's induction rate is about 20%, which is the local, state and national average.

How many physicians are male? What if I don't want a male physician?

About 40% of the providers delivering at Mercy are male. Depending on your physician's or provider group's on call schedule, a male physician may be on-call the day you deliver. Some provider groups offer all female physicians, but depending on the timing of your delivery or in certain emergency situations our hospital laborist, who could be a male physician, may have to deliver your baby.

Do you have gentle "C-sections" (e.g. clear drapes, having partner in room, skin to skin right after birth)?

Yes we do!

Can you have 'no separation' after birth? What is your policy for rooming in?

Yes. We support close family bonding after birth and "rooming-in" if that is your preference. Mercy has a Mother-Baby care team where the same nurse cares for mom and baby together. With all private rooms and special security features, our birth center provides a safe environment for families who want to keep their baby with them throughout their stay

When should you begin birthing classes?

During your second trimester is one of the best times to begin birthing classes. Classes fill up quickly, so it's best to plan ahead.

Is having an epidural my choice? At what point do I have to decide?

The decision to have an epidural is a very individual choice. Your provider will discuss your specific circumstance during your labor.

Is it OK to bring an acoustic guitar into the birthing room?

Of course! We have had many musicians and other soothing sounds for the moms who deliver!

Will Mercy hospital respect my non-Catholic beliefs?

Yes. Mercy Hospital respects the faith beliefs of all individuals and treats all our patients with reverence, compassion, justice and excellence.