

The Five “W’s” of Packing for the Hospital

Many popular pregnancy apps and website have a lot to say about you should or shouldn't bring with you to the hospital when it's time to have a baby. Here's some advice from the pros:

WHEN SHOULD WE PACK?

It is best to be packed and ready to go (with the exception of maybe a couple last minute toiletries) by 37 or 38 weeks. Once you are full term, labor could happen any day and the last thing you want to worry about is remembering what to bring! If you are intentionally waiting to pack the last few items, keep a note on top of your bag to remind you to grab them. When you are packed to your satisfaction, keep the bags by the door so you are ready in case you need to make a quick exit.

WHO ARE WE PACKING FOR?

Everyone knows about packing for mom and the new baby, but don't forget your partner! If your partner is staying at the hospital with you during labor and postpartum, he or she will need changes of clothes, toiletries, and snacks, just like mom.

WHY ARE WE PACKING A HOSPITAL BAG?

Doesn't the hospital supply everything you need? Yes, and no. Most hospitals will supply patient gowns, blankets, postpartum pads and underwear, and even some toiletries. And don't forget baby's supplies! However, the experiences of labor and a new baby can feel pretty overwhelming, especially to first-time parents. Having a few comfort items from home- like a personal pillow or your own stretchy yoga pants- to help create a calming environment for the three of you can be a huge help.

HOW SHOULD WE PACK?

Many people pack for a hospital stay like they are expecting to spend a week overseas. In reality, less is more. Moms having a vaginal delivery will spend only a day or two after birth at the hospital. C-section moms will stay a little longer: more like three or four days. Remember, everything you bring will have to be carried back home, in addition to the baby's car seat and all the cards, balloons, flowers, and gifts that visitors may bring. We recommend two small bags, one tote for the labor room and one carry-on size bag for postpartum.

WHAT SHOULD WE PACK?

The question we've all been waiting for! As we mentioned earlier, the hospital is going to provide many of the necessities, so you will only need a few items. Below are some important recommendations.

In Your Labor Bag:

- Photo ID, insurance card, and hospital paperwork like prenatal records
- A list of birth preferences (if you need help with this, check out Northside's "Identifying Labor Preferences" at: <http://www.northside.com/gettingready>)
- Bedroom slippers or flip flops and a robe to walk around the labor unit
- Snacks for your partner
- Camera or phone with chargers

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- Ponytail holders and lip balm
- Any items that help promote relaxation for you: photos, aromatherapy diffusers, pillow, childbirth preparation tools, etc.

In your postpartum bag:

- A couple of maternity outfits or pjs to wear at the hospital
- A going home outfit for mom (maternity sizes), baby, and partner
- Any personal toiletries you might want
- Snacks
- Any prescription medications your partner takes regularly