



How To Choose A Provider: Interview Tips

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In today's healthcare system, women often find themselves putting their bodies, health, and overall sense of well-being into the hands of providers that they hardly know. When choosing a provider, do you know their plan for handling certain situations? Do you know how much medical intervention they routinely administer? Do you know his or her preferences, and does he or she know yours? It is imperative that patients take the time to ask the hard questions and get the answers that are vital to their experience. Instead of leaving it to the provider's discretion, seek providers who will work along with you in partnership to determine the best care plan for the situation. By taking the time to find a provider that respects and honors your opinions, the patient/provider relationship can have a foundation of trust.

Make an appointment for a consultation with a new provider.

Call and tell the receptionist you are looking for a new provider and just want to talk to the doctor or midwife. Tell them again when you go to the office. In some situations, an office may not honor your request to schedule a consultation without becoming a patient of the doctor. This may be the first red flag that the provider may not be the best fit for your situation depending on the type of relationship that you would like to have.

Talking to the doctor or midwife.

To find out where your present provider stands on issues important to you, ask him at your next visit. Emphasize that you do not want or need an exam, you are simply seeking a conversation. Have pertinent questions written down before hand and have a pen to write down his or her answers. Be clear about your concerns and requests by tailoring your questions to what you need from your doctor or midwife. What are your issues? Do you want support for a VBAC? Do you want your birth to be a low intervention natural birth? Also, it is always a good idea to know who the back-up doctors are and what their policies are should they be in attendance at your birth. If you are pregnant, find out if your doctor/midwife has a vacation scheduled near your due date. Throughout this process, keep in mind that you should never be made to feel like the questions you are asking are unimportant or that you are being rushed. You are finding out invaluable information about your care.

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Ten Interview Questions for a Care Provider

1. Approximately how many VBACs have you attended?
2. Of those patients in your practice who originally wanted VBACs, how many had vaginal births?
3. What do you think my chances are of VBAC success, given my childbirth history?
4. What is your cesarean rate?
5. How do you usually manage a postdate pregnancy or suspected Cephalopelvic Disproportion?
6. What's a reasonable length of time for a VBAC labor if I'm healthy and my baby appears to be healthy?
7. What percentage of your patients' births do you attend?
8. How many people can I have with me during the labor and birth?
9. What is your usual recommendation for IVs, Pitocin, prostaglandin gel, amniotomy, epidurals, confinement to bed, EFM (and so on)?
10. How close together are your appointments?

The above questions were taken from Diana Korte's book *The VBAC Companion: The Expectant Mother's Guide to Vaginal Birth After Cesarean*.

More Questions for Providers

- How often do women in your care have completely unmedicated births? How many with minimal medication?
- In what percentage of your patients do you induce labor?
- What is your episiotomy rate? How many mothers deliver over an intact perineum?
- What is the percentage of forceps delivery or vacuum extraction?
- How long have you been in practice? What are your credentials?
- What hospitals do you have privileges at?
- Is the practice group or solo? Do all the doctors share the same philosophy and practices?
- What prenatal tests/procedures do you require/recommend?
- How do you feel about labor support persons in addition to my partner?
- How many women give birth in squatting, standing, hands and knees, or side-lying position?
- Do you have any vacations planned near my due date (if expecting)?
- What book(s) would you recommend for me to read?
- What would you suggest if my baby were breech?
- Are you planning to be at the hospital with me as I labor?
- What are my options at 40, 41, and 42+ weeks?