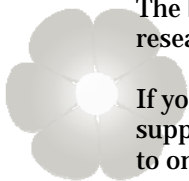




## Changing Your Care Provider

It is not uncommon to find that, as you become more educated as to your birth options and become a more educated consumer in your healthcare, you begin to wonder if the care provider that you started out with is still the best choice for your birth preferences.



The best thing to do is to be completely open and honest with your care provider as you begin to learn, research, and grow.

If you still feel that you cannot completely trust your care provider, if you feel that they are not completely supportive of your choices, an advocate for *your* health care choices, strongly consider changing providers to one who will meet your needs and support your choices better.

It is also not uncommon that, when presented with the possibility of changing providers, you might feel you have very good reasons, despite your reasons for changing, to stay with the one you are not completely confident in.

Below are some reasons commonly given for staying with a care provider that may not be supportive of your choices.

### **I have a relationship/history with *this* provider (gynecological care, family friend, etc..)**

It is more important that you can completely trust that your provider will advocate for your best interests and choices than to remain in a medical relationship where you do not feel your care provider will support your choices. Remember, if you cannot feel this way now, think of when you are at your most vulnerable (in labor) and you are being cared for by this individual.

### **Labor & birth is *only* one day, I can put up with anyone for a short time**

The average first time mom will be in labor for an average of 16 hours. If you are coerced into or choose an induction, this time can be even longer. Remember that labor can last for a few hours and up to a few days. Remember, too, that postpartum care can mean staying in the hospital for quite a few days and numerous postpartum visits to the care provider's office.

Also, remember that, if you cannot trust your doctor to advocate for your best interests, and he/she does, in fact, end up advocating for their own best interests, and, by some chance, you end up with a cesarean, you can be assured that your hospital stay will be longer and your postpartum visits to the office will be more frequent.

Finally, the physical, emotional, and mental repercussions of that *one day* will last for a lifetime, good or bad.

### **My provider knows what's best for me**

Remember, no one is responsible for your health care but you. This is *your body and your birth*. If you don't feel supported, if you don't trust them to advocate for your best interests, trust that gut instinct. Unfortunately, many (not all) providers design the policies and procedures of their practice around what is in *their* best interests, not those of their patients. Some other providers practice in a cookie-cutter practice – applying the same rigid rules and policies of procedures to all women, regardless of their emotional and physical needs, and regardless of the medical indications warranting these practices.

If you don't feel that you are retaining your autonomy, if you feel like they have given you a number and taken away your name, it is time to find a provider who remembers that there is a person attached to your uterus.



## **I've waited too long**

You never know until you have tried. Many providers will take women late into their last trimester, some even at 36 weeks and beyond. Don't take that as license to wait until the last minute, as it may limit your options.

Also, depending on how severe your situation is, and the circumstances surrounding your particular situation, there is always the option of going in during labor and simply asking for another doctor who is not your own.



## **I can't imagine 'firing' my care provider**

Most providers understand that they cannot be the right provider for every woman and won't take it personally. But, even if yours does not react positively, remember that it is *your* decision, and whomever you hire to attend and care for you during your birth works for *you, not the other way around*.

Just as you would not continue to retain the services of a babysitter who abused the relationship of a caregiver to your child, don't settle for subpar care when it comes to your own care. Don't sacrifice your birth for someone else's feelings.

For more information, complete the Care Provider Assessment attached and then check out the following links:

Choosing a Caregiver: <http://www.childbirthconnection.org/article.asp?ck=10158>

Best Evidence: <http://www.childbirthconnection.org/article.asp?ck=10155>



## Care Provider Assessment

Answer these yes or no questions as openly and honestly as possible:

1. I feel that my provider values my opinion. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I feel that my provider sees me as an individual \_\_\_\_\_
3. My provider knows my name \_\_\_\_\_
4. My provider takes extra time to answer my questions \_\_\_\_\_
5. When I discuss alternative choices in my healthcare, (s)he discusses them without condemnation \_\_\_\_\_
6. When I voice a fear or uncertainty, I feel validated, not reproved \_\_\_\_\_
7. I have heard my care provider tell me that (s)he won't allow me, doesn't 'do', or uses other such commanding/instructing language \_\_\_\_\_
8. I have given my provider my birth plan and (s)he seems genuinely interested \_\_\_\_\_
9. When I leave an appointment, I feel discouraged, let down, and frustrated \_\_\_\_\_
10. Friends and family have good things to say about this care provider \_\_\_\_\_

Answer these questions as openly and honestly as possible:

I *want* to change providers because I believe a new provider might make me feel:

I *want* to change providers because I believe a new provider might help my birth be:

I believe a provider should:

I *don't want* to change providers because I feel that:

After working through this assessment, review your answers, evaluate your feelings, and check your intuition. No one can make this choice for you, it is solely yours. Your support team will support you in whatever choice you make with no condemnation, so make the choice that is best for you.