

Dads, pre-plan your labor ride to the hospital before it's too late

Working as The New York Doula for over a decade, I've seen quite a few parents-to-be become overwhelmed when going to the hospital once the mother is in labor. Here are tips on how to make sure your ride to the hospital will go smoothly:

1. Discuss which vehicle is best for you for getting to the hospital. You might have your own car but are you able to drive when you have an impatient laboring partner sitting laboring next to you? Booking a car service, like UBER or a cab will enable you to put all your attention on your partner. I hope it goes without saying that you should only take a bus or subway only as a last resort!
2. Sign up for a childbirth class early on. A good class will prepare you for things like common signs of labor, breathing techniques, when to go to the hospital and car seats.
3. Make sure your hospital bag is packed as soon as your partner is in labor. You never know how fast things will progress.
4. Have a doula for support. While you might think you can handle your wife in labor, chances are it might be more difficult than you imagined. Having a doula there for you both will keep you relaxed at home and from going to the hospital too early, so you only have to make the trip once!
5. Make sure your car-app is working and up-to-date! Last year I went to see a couple in labor, and once they decided they would like to go to the hospital, the dad realized his UBER app wasn't working. He got so nervous about it that the mom-to-be was fiddling with it herself. They started fighting (yes, some moms in labor love fighting) and in just 10 stressful minutes her labor had stalled. It took another 4 hours for her to drift back into labor-land after the disruption.
6. Know when to go to the hospital. Make sure your doula and OB or midwife have given you a "green light" to leave for the hospital so you don't arrive too early. Contractions are usually every 5 minutes and 1 minute long over the course of an hour when it's time to leave. If they change when your partner lies down, walks around or takes a bath, then it's too soon. Of course you can always go to the

hospital when you think it's time, but your OB team might tell you it's a bit early and to go back home and get more rest. Of course you want to get her there in time, but the longer she labors at home the less chance she will need to be artificially induced.

7. Consider the traffic.

This sounds obvious, but it's not always easy. Observe your partner and decide with your doula whether you should leave now or after rush hour. You don't want to get stuck in a traffic jam with a laboring woman who is already nervous about the car ride.

8. Give your partner a snack before you enter the hospital.

Once in the hospital a laboring woman is not allowed to eat anymore. Even if she's not hungry you can feed her a bit of freshly made rice pudding or a piece of banana. Make sure she eats something so she has energy for the next several hours.

9. Avoid tunnels if possible.

Last January I had a birth in Manhattan where we planned our route carefully and were able to get around traffic. However due to the dad's nervous driving we ended up in a wrong lane and down we went into a tunnel. Moms panic easily in a tunnel, especially in slow traffic.

10. Know how to position your partner in the car.

A laboring woman won't be able to sit in the car seat. Most likely she will kneel in the car or lie on her side on the back seat. A doula is a pro in positioning someone in labor safely in her car; while you pack everything in the trunk she will buckle her in safely and make sure she is comfortable.

11. Bring a towel and a plastic bag for the drive.

Put the towel on the seat in case her water breaks in the car. Have the plastic bag handy in case she gets nauseous and has to throw up.

12. Bring a baby car seat.

The hospital won't release you without one. Put it in the trunk on the ride there, since you'll need the space up front for laboring mom. Make sure you know how to install it once your baby is born.

13. Lastly, if you're driving know about parking at the hospital.

Does your hospital offer valet parking, or have a parking lot close by? Make sure you drop the doula and mom off at admissions first and then go park, or as mentioned above, take a cab or an Uber!

Expectant dads agree the help and support of a doula is priceless. A doula can help create a birth plan, be with you and your partner so she can labor at home as long as you are comfortable, explain what's going on once you're in the hospital, communicate with your medical birth team and in general be a great co-pilot for helping you get to the hospital and so much more.

She will be the one who stays with you from start to finish. And perhaps most importantly, if you feel you need to close your eyes for a few minutes or leave the room because you are getting lightheaded she will be there for your partner all the time.

Interested in hiring a doula? Please contact me below:

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<https://plus.google.com/u/0/111203690191418760260/posts>