

# Second birth needs different planning

By Dr. Ted Mala

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Do you remember when you or a relative or friend of yours had their first baby? Every kick, every cry was a special occasion. The mystery of the creation of a new life was shared with everyone. And then the baby was born and life again settled down to its normal pace.

And then a second baby was born. Now all you have to do is prepare for its birth the same way you did the first time. Right? **WRONG!** With all of the new "birthing centers" and ideas around today, the second delivery is one that you should plan for much differently than you did for the first.

After all, there are three of you involved now: the father, the mother and your first child. Each person has her/his special role to play. The extent of the involvement of your child depends on his age and how interested and mature he is.

When should you tell your child that you are pregnant?

Some folks feel if you tell them too soon, they will get impatient waiting for their brother or sister to be born.

Normally it would be best to tell them when you can use it as an opportunity to explain sexuality, love and family life to your child.

If you are open and honest and involve them from the beginning and do not give them the impression that they are being left out of a secret, they will not be that concerned about when you will give birth.

These months are special ones and a good opportunity to begin to teach and prepare your child for birth. There are a number of ways this can be done.

1) Through discussion: answer questions openly and honestly without giving too much detail. Children seem to ask for as much as they can handle at that time.

2) Drawings: get your child to draw some pictures and then talk about them with you. This will help you understand what your child's level of under-

standing is at the time.

3) Books: there are lots of simple books and pictures around to explain birth.

4) Baby pictures: go back and show your child what he or she looked like when he was born.

It helps to remind him how he was welcomed into the world when he was born. Some parents make them into baby books.

5) Prenatal exam: some parents take their children with them for their prenatal exam so that they can listen to the fetal heartbeat, feel the baby move and to get to know your midwife or doctor.

6) Exercises: exercising with your child involves him in the process of getting ready for birth.

7) Classes: some places have classes for children getting them ready for birth. Check with your clinic or health association to see if they have any materials (films, pictures, etc.) for children.

8) Dolls: these are good to help explain labor and delivery.

9) You can imitate the sounds and expressions that you make through labor for your child.

Most birthing centers recommend that children be allowed to be with their mother and the new baby as soon as possible after birth so that they can see that they are both alright and that by being able to see and possibly touch their new brother or sister, that they feel involved and do not feel left out of the excitement.

Something can go wrong though and you must prepare your child for that too. You might have to have a Caesarian birth or be flown to Anchorage for you delivery. There should be a support person available to care for you child during your delivery.

Some women have their own support person in the delivery room with them. Remember that this same person cannot care for your child and that another relative or friend should care for him or her.

There are lots of things to think about after the delivery

too. Your child makes new adjustments to another person entering the family, especially one who is getting all of the attention now. It can be very good if this is a baby born to a step parent as it often brings the family closer together. It can be negative if jealousy is allowed to develop.

There are special classes being offered now and then about all of this here in Anchorage. Also, there are books you can read and pamphlets that you can write away for. If you want more information on who to write to, send me a note in care of the Tundra Times and I will send you the addresses and telephone numbers of who to contact for further details.

If your giving birth to another baby is going to be a positive experience for your child, you have to begin to prepare him or her early. That's what being a parent is all about.

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