

# Janine Smith

## A checklist For 2nd-Time Parents

1.	<b>Worries or fears.</b> How are you doing? This can be a time to talk through your previous birth as well as any struggles you may have experienced in the early days to feel prepared for doing it again.
2.	<b>Childcare.</b> This is an important factor because you need to make sure your children are being looked after before you can focus on labour. If this isn't straight-forward, make a list of options with numbers for daytime, evening, through the night and weekends.
3.	<b>Packing for birth.</b> Just in case labour and birth are quick and you need to move fast – have everything packed and ready to go. If you are getting a taxi or a lift – make sure that number is saved and easy to find.
4.	<b>Preparing your house.</b> Think about what you might need when your baby is here and where you might want to nest for a few days. Do you have cushions to sit up comfortably? Have you stocked up with food? Do you need to batch cook and put some meals in the freezer? Do you have snacks and easy food? Have you got the baby and post-birth essentials? Do you need childcare help?
5.	<b>Early labour.</b> This can be brief or it is possible for this stage to rumble on for a few days with Braxton Hicks contractions, mild contractions, cramping, back-ache and maybe some fidgety nesting. Go with it if it is taking a while – get your birth bag and house ready for when baby is here, rest, eat, use your birth ball.
6.	<b>Quick labour – being ready.</b> No-one knows how long labour and birth will be but second labours can be speedy once they get going, especially compared to the first time. It can be useful to prepare for a fast labour so you are ready to head to hospital or to call out a midwife for a home-birth as soon as your contractions feel like they are established.
7.	<b>Listen to your instincts.</b> Try to be guided by what feels right – to be comfortable, to be calm, to work with your contractions, as well as thinking about going to hospital or calling out your midwife for a home birth.
8.	<b>Contractions.</b> The pace and intensity of your contractions can change quickly – labour can go from plodding to intense and labour can go from steady to pushing and giving birth in minutes. It can be powerful so go with it, listen to instincts and be guided by your body.
9.	<b>Recovery.</b> Many women talk about how recovery can feel different, possibly because birth may have been more straight-forward and possibly because you have done it before and you know a bit more of what to expect. Even if you feel great – you still need to take it easy, to let your body rest and heal.
10.	<b>Cuddles &amp; pottering.</b> As you recover, rest, get to know your new baby and spend time with your older child, take it easy, curl up in bed or on the sofa, potter and be looked after.

Labour can last for several hours, sometimes leading into days: there isn't a right length of labour which is why it is important to make decisions as you go because your needs may alter depending on how long it is.

Labour and birth can be different to your previous experience of labour and birth, it may be quicker and more intense, you may have different considerations, especially if this is a VBAC. And you may also find that your new baby is different and issues like feeding could be easier or more familiar.

It can be important for you to be comfortable, rested, able to work with your contractions, to be supported, to be calm and to be able to help your contractions work as effectively as possible.

As labour and birth can be unpredictable, you may need to make different decisions and your birth plan may change. Good communication makes a big difference to how informed and included you are, so it can help to ask questions to better understand your options and what can happen next, including having a caesarean.

### **Based on a range of evidence, experience and maternity policies:**

- The Midwife's Labour & Birth Handbook
- Royal College of Midwives (RCM)
- Maye's Midwifery
- Dynamic Positions in Birth by Margaret Jowitt
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG)
- NICE Guidelines
- Dr Sara Wickham
- Dr Rachel Reed
- NHS

## **About Janine**

I have worked with expectant and new parents for over 20 years and I also attend births as a doula. Every parent I work with is different, as is every labour I have been part of, including my own. As the person who is pregnant and in labour, it's important you are at the centre of your care, which is why I encourage you to personalise your birth preparation, to think about what matters to you. This means you can be honest, ask questions and plan around more realistic expectations.

Effective birth preparation means planning beyond your ideal birth, so you are better able to manage any challenges and changes.

Ways to work with me:

- Join the Birth & Baby Community
- Arrange for 1:1 sessions
- Read my antenatal course and birth guides

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## **Notes & Questions**