

## A Strong Start: Education helps parents-to-be prepare for life with a new baby

Written by By Stephanie Thurrott  
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Childbirth may be natural, but that doesn't mean it's simple. Knowing what to expect—and how to cope—can help new moms as they bring their babies into the world.



Sara Thomas, 26, of Winsboro, Texas, was an experienced mother—her son is 7 years old. But when she was expecting her daughter in late 2009, she wanted to try natural childbirth. “I didn't take any classes before I had my son, and I had an epidural with him, so this was a lot different,” she says.

The classes offered at Memorial Hospital helped Thomas, and a friend who coached her, learn how talking, breathing and massage could help her best manage the labor pains. The medication-free delivery was worth it, Thomas says. Beth O'Dell, a Memorial Hospital perinatal nurse who teaches childbirth classes, says, “Women who desire a non-pharmacological birth obtain the tools and confidence needed through the childbirth classes.”

Education also helped Thomas and her new daughter, Bristol, get off to a good start with breastfeeding. “I learned different positions and how she was supposed to be latched on, and I watched videos of people breast feeding, which was helpful,” she says. Susan Brewer, an R.N. and Lactation Consultant at Memorial Hospital, says that education can also give new mothers the confidence they need to successfully breastfeed their new baby.

The classes, offered every month on a Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., cover:

Childbirth education, including breathing techniques, relaxation exercises, stages of labor, signs of preterm and true labor, pharmacological and nonpharmacological pain relief, the role of the support person, expectations of hospital stay and postpartum care.

Newborn care, including diapering, how often to feed the baby (breast and bottle feeding), normal signs of a healthy infant, signs of a sick infant, how to take baby's temperature and when to call the doctor.

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Breastfeeding classes are held the 2nd Tuesday of every month from 6 to 8 p.m. This class covers the benefits of breastfeeding, how breastfeeding works, the importance of breastfeeding as soon as possible after delivery, how often to breastfeed, how the baby stimulates milk production, how to latch the baby on, different positions for holding your baby, and nutrition for breastfeeding mothers.

Baby on the Way?

For more information on the Perinatal services at Memorial Hospital, call 903-439-4062. To register for Childbirth Classes, please contact the Perinatal Department at 903-439-4090.