



PeaceHealth
St. Joseph Medical Center

CHILDBIRTH & PARENTING PREPARATION COURSES

Bellingham Technical College & PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The Childbirth and Parenting Preparation courses co-sponsored by Bellingham Technical College and PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center prepare expectant families for childbirth and early parenting. Pregnant families can choose from a variety of courses to best meet their needs including the traditional 8 session “Childbirth & Parenting” course, a 5 session condensed version of the longer course titled “Pregnancy & Childbirth”, a weekend model for busy expectant families titled “Preparation for Childbirth: Weekend Condensed”, and a partially online model titled “Understanding Birth eClass” that meets two times face to face and the rest of the study is online.

Each evening class session lasts approximately two and one half hours and weekend classes are held all day Saturday and Sunday afternoons. All classes are conducted in a relaxed, informal atmosphere. Classes are offered in Bellingham at the St. Luke’s Health Education Center and at the main campus of the PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center.

Participants are taught physiology of pregnancy, prenatal care, nutrition, comfort measures, hazards and danger signs of pregnancy. Specific techniques for relaxation, breathing, exercising, the role of the support person, and knowledge of the birth process are presented. Other related topics such as newborn care, postpartum planning and adjustment, infant feeding, car safety and community resources are presented. Evidence-based information about medical options, procedures and choices is presented. A birth plan may be developed, for discussion with the participant’s health care provider, indicating some of the choices pregnant families feel are important for their birth.

A variety of instructional methods are used including lecture, discussion, role playing practice, use of audio visuals, and online resources. Numerous audiovisual aids such as videos, DVDs, charts, and handouts are used to illustrate and reinforce concepts taught. Ample time is allotted for questions and discussion as well as for practice of techniques.

PHILOSOPHY

The Childbirth and Parenting Preparation courses co-sponsored by Bellingham Technical College and PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center are offered to expectant women and their support persons beginning in the sixth to seventh month of pregnancy. The program endeavors to promote education and preparation for childbirth, family centered maternity care (FCMC), postpartum, parenting education, and consumer awareness. Expectant families gain physical, emotional and intellectual tools for making choices in childbirth based on knowledge of alternatives.

Specific techniques for relaxation, breathing, exercising, and knowledge of the birth process are taught to aid the pregnant woman and support person(s) to work effectively with medical personnel during pregnancy, labor, birth and postpartum. Since each pregnant women/couple and

each birth is unique, it is felt that offering a wide variety of techniques and ideas enables the pregnant women and her support person to tailor methods to suit their individual needs. During the classes, participants often write a birth plan, which indicates that they have given thought to their expected labor and birth, and have prioritized the alternatives that are important to them. The birth plan is not a blueprint; it is merely an index of the couple's preferences. Flexibility regarding preferences is emphasized in classes, as the progress and outcome of labor can never be fully anticipated. Also stressed is the importance of working cooperatively with the health care provider.

The classes provide a unifying and communicative bond between medical personnel and lay persons, encouraging individualized, evidence-based obstetrical. While it is believed that childbirth is a joyous family event as well as a physical process, efforts are made to prepare the pregnant family for unexpected outcomes, with the goal being a safe, happy birth. The program also seeks to create public opinion favorable to the goals of childbirth education as it endeavors to further the understanding of family-centered maternity care by health care providers and the general public.

COURSE GOALS: The overall goals of this course are to:

- Involve the woman and her family and support persons in the processes of pregnancy, labor, birth, and early parenting.
- Provide a support group of expectant families for class participants.
- Provide the pregnant woman and her support persons with accurate information about normal pregnancy, labor and birth, and the characteristics of newborns.
- Promote the good health of pregnant women and their families through teaching about nutrition, exercise, rest, and body mechanics.
- Provide options for managing stress, not only from pregnancy, labor and birth, but also from our lifestyle, through varied relaxation techniques.
- Reduce the stress of labor and birth through specific relaxation and breathing techniques geared to the individual needs of the women in labor.
- Provide information for enhancing communication skills between the couple and within their family.
- Provide a nonjudgmental setting for exploring the emotions and often new feelings that accompany every pregnancy.
- Provide information about local birthing options, choice available for individuals and families, and community resources.
- Emphasize the role of the couple as partners in the perinatal team throughout pregnancy, labor and birth, and early parenting.
- Provide families with the most current information regarding infant care, lactation, and postpartum changes within the family (including emotional, physical, social, and psychological changes).