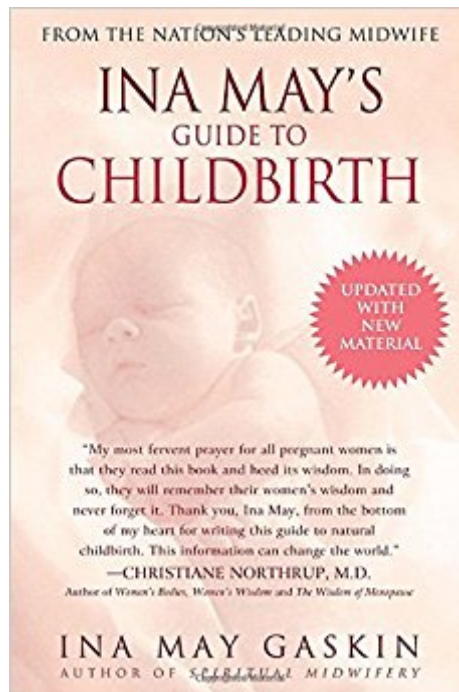




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# Ina May's Guide To Childbirth



## Synopsis

What you need to know to have the best birth experience for you. Drawing upon her thirty-plus years of experience, Ina May Gaskin, the nation's leading midwife, shares the benefits and joys of natural childbirth by showing women how to trust in the ancient wisdom of their bodies for a healthy and fulfilling birthing experience. Based on the female-centered Midwifery Model of Care, Ina May's Guide to Natural Childbirth gives expectant mothers comprehensive information on everything from the all-important mind-body connection to how to give birth without technological intervention. Filled with inspiring birth stories and practical advice, this invaluable resource includes:

- Reducing the pain of labor without drugs--and the miraculous roles touch and massage play
- What really happens during labor
- Orgasmic birth--making birth pleasurable
- Episiotomy--is it really necessary?
- Common methods of inducing labor--and which to avoid at all costs
- Tips for maximizing your chances of an unmedicated labor and birth
- How to avoid postpartum bleeding--and depression
- The risks of anesthesia and cesareans--what your doctor doesn't necessarily tell you
- The best ways to work with doctors and/or birth care providers
- How to create a safe, comfortable environment for birth in any setting, including a hospital
- And much more!

Ina May's Guide to Natural Childbirth takes the fear out of childbirth by restoring women's faith in their own natural power to give birth with more ease, less pain, and less medical intervention.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Founding member and former president of the Midwives Alliance of North America and author of *Spiritual Midwifery*, Gaskin offers encouragement and practical advice in her upbeat and informative book on natural childbirth. Since the mid-1970s, Gaskin and the midwives in her practice on a Summertown, Tenn., commune known as "The Farm," have attended over 2,200 natural births. Gaskin, who learned the rudiments of her gentle birthing technique from the Mayans in Guatemala, has helped bring attention to the method's remarkably low rate of morbidity and medical intervention. Couples considering natural childbirth will get inspirational coaxing from more than a dozen first-person narratives shared by the author's clients. Gaskin decries what she sees as Western medicine's focus on pain during birth, arguing that natural birthing can not only be euphoric and blissful but also orgasmic (a survey of 150 natural birthing women "found thirty-two who reported experiencing at least one orgasmic birth"). The second half of Gaskin's book deals with the practical side of natural birthing, including how to avoid standard medical interventions such as epidurals, episiotomies and even prenatal amniocentesis that may be unnecessary, even dangerous, to mother or child. While this may not be the definitive guide to natural childbirth, it is a comfortable and supportive read for women who want to trust their bodies to do what comes naturally. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Using history as her guide, nationally recognized midwife Gaskin explores what she hopes will be a renaissance in natural childbirth, something that she's been advocating since the mid-1970s. By focusing on how women of ancient civilizations and other modern peoples give birth, Gaskin puts our own hypersensitivities in perspective, uncovering a beautiful, sometimes orgasmic experience rather than a dreadful, painful one. Sure, pain is part of childbirth, but preparing for the pain in a realistic rather than sentimental way--whether giving birth at home or in a hospital--can be the key to a woman's ability to deal with it naturally. Within the pages of personal anecdotes, some touching, some startling, from Gaskin's patients and colleagues, every woman is sure to find something to relate to, whether or not she chooses to have a medicine-free labor. The helpful back matter features a glossary, a detailed resource list including advocacy groups and Web sites, and a bibliography that includes periodicals, rounding out an extremely comprehensive and up-to-date guide on the topic. Mary Frances Wilkens Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

What it's about: Ina May Gaskin is the best-known midwife in all the land. She is, in

fact, the only midwife to have a medically-recognized procedure named for her (The Gaskin Maneuver, a technique used to resolve shoulder dystocia). She also •and this should come as no surprise• a HUGE hippie. In the early-70s, Gaskin, her husband, and some friends started a commune in rural Tennessee called The Farm. The intentional community brought together non-violent, vegetarian, spiritual people bound by a “shared psychedelic vision. The Farm is now well known for its midwifery practice (one of the first out-of-hospital birthing centers in the U.S.). The Farm Midwifery Center’s statistics are pretty astounding. From 1970-2010, the midwives accepted 2,844 pregnant women for care. During that time, they experience no maternal deaths. There were only 148 transports to the hospital and only 50 C-sections. Gaskin’s book is presented in two parts (followed by a number of Appendices). The first part is a selection of birth stories, told in first person by mothers who delivered at The Farm. They are intended to combat the barrage of negativity that pregnant women hear so often (It’s so painful! You must get an epidural! Why not just schedule a C-section?!) by providing “practical wisdom, information, and inspiration. The second part of the book is written by Gaskin and provides practical advice (some opinion-based, some scientifically/medically-based) about labor and delivery. Gaskin condones unmedicated births (unless intervention is medically necessary), and her practices and advice strongly reflect that bent. Rating: 2.5/5 (for the first half of the book, I would give it a 1.5/5; for the second, a 3.5/5) For me, this read like two separate books. It was all I could do to get through the first part (the birth stories section). I tried my hardest not to be too judge-y . . . but it’s really difficult when reading passages like this: "On the afternoon before my son, Jon, was born, I was reading Ram Dass’s book *Be Here Now* and feeling very centered and high with it. I remember I fastened on a particular word and meaning: surrender. I began having contractions and feeling big waves of energy moving. I visualized my yoni as a big, open cave beneath the surface of the ocean, with huge, surging currents sweeping in and out. As the wave of water rushed into my cave, my contraction would grow and swell and fill, reach a full peak, then ebb smoothly back out. I surrendered over and over to the great, oceanic, engulfing waves. It was really delightful •very orgasmic and invigorating." But wait! That’s not all. A few days after giving birth to Jon, this particular mother went to be with a friend who was “tired and afraid” during birth. Here’s her description: "I wanted to connect deeply with her and share my recent experience to help her relax and open. Pamela was naked, propped up on pillows on the bed,

holding on to her knees. I took my clothes off (except for my underpants and pad since I was still bleeding from Jon's birth) and crawled up on the bed with her. I laid next to her head to head, breast to breast, womb to womb. I told her about my cave and ocean and the great rushing, swelling, and opening. I told her about surrendering over and over and letting go. We began experiencing her contractions together. We held each other and rushed and soared together. My womb, though empty, was swelling and contracting too. I could feel blood rushing out with the contractions, but not too much. I knew it was okay."To each her own, I suppose . . . but this is a little much for me. The thought of one of my BFFs coming to be with me during labor, stripping down, and telling me about her oceanic while I'm having contractions is, frankly, laughable. Call me unenlightened if you must. I really could have skipped the first section of this book entirely. But the second section was much more helpful and practical (despite also having a strong hippie vibe). There are drawings (and some very graphic photographs) of birthing positions that use gravity and various other techniques to help get that baby out without the necessity of forceps or vacuum extractors (or c-section, for that matter). There is lots of discussion on the "Sphincter Law," the "set of basic assumptions about birth" that Gaskin and her partners follow: 1) sphincters (excretory, vaginal, and cervical) work best in private, 2) they can't be opened at will and don't respond well to commands (like "Push!!!"), 3) when a sphincter is in the process of opening, it may suddenly close if the person "becomes upset, frightened, humiliated, or self-conscious" and 4) if you relax your mouth/jaw, your cervix/vagina/anus are able to open to full capacity. There is an explanation of medical interventions and their pros and cons (mostly cons), as well as non-medical alternatives (like breast stimulation for induction of labor). Gaskin definitely knows her stuff. And, although her perspective is a little more New Age-y than my own, she provides some good tips for people who are looking to avoid medications (and c-section) during birth. If you fall into that category, this book is worth at least a skim.

This book is amazing. Sure, some parts of some stories might be a little hokey for some people. But the insights that this woman gives into the process of giving birth are invaluable. It has made me lose my fear and anxiety and hold onto nothing but the sheer joy, excitement and openness of the process of birth. So many things are written about that EVERY woman should know, but for some reason is not let in on by our current hospital obstetric regime. People have remarked that Ina is

bitter and abusive towards hospitals and medicine. I don't find that to be the case at all. She is simply factual, and honest in her disapproval of many of the approaches and lack of what should be the most basic, intuitive widespread knowledge regarding labor and delivery of hospitals and the doctors that serve them. She has an open mind and great respect for healthcare workers. Every woman has the freedom to find what approach works best for them. However, they should at the very least KNOW what the possibilities are. Start with this book.

When I mentioned to a friend that I wanted to have a natural birth, she quickly ran to her bookshelf and told me to read this book. I was newly pregnant, I had a lot of questions, and I was very scared of birth. This book made me fall in love with childbirth! I was truly inspired and my eyes were opened to "the other side" of how birth could be! I was not afraid of giving birth any more. I wasn't naive enough to think that I would never need hospitals, or interventions, but it gave me hope that birth didn't have to be painful and scary! This was the beginning of a long journey of studying and prepared to have a natural birth. My baby was born in a hospital, because of where I lived, but I was able to have a natural birth and I loved it! I recommend this book to all women. Just read it and fall in love with what women can do!

Amazing! Gave me the confidence to question even my midwives when they wanted to send me to the hospital due to a protocol risk. I knew my body, knew the risks and knew what would happen in the hospital. I stayed strong and delivered a happy healthy baby!!! thank you Ina May! You are a gift to women and your legacy will live on in your book!!!!

Flawless, and amazing this book has truly changed my whole view of the capability of my body and how labor is. After reading this book I have such a new found confidence and lack of fear and even better an excitement about what's to come for my second labor. Ina May has truly dazzled me with her teachings and the love that she showed these women and the power that she let these women see they had. I thank god for this book for without it I don't know what my labor would be like, and I feel that I am truly prepared in thought mind and body going into labor and that the power of my thoughts is one of the strongest things to carry me through! Thank you Ina May!

Amazing book. This is the only book I read in its entirety to prepare me for my VBAC. It is filled with excellent, factual information about various birthing methods and situations. It is also incredibly empowering. I had a successful hospital VBAC with Pitocin and no epidural or other drugs. I didn't

experience pain during labor. I contribute that, in part, to the preparation this book gave me. Even

This book contains the same information as "The Birth Partner", which my husband and I found to be easier to read. Gaskin's book contains a lot of birth stories, which got boring after a while. The book has a hippie appeal to it, if you like that...

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