



OB/GYN Specialists of Brevard

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INFORMED CONSENT OF PREGNANCY

1. The obstetricians and certified nurse midwives of **OB/GYN Specialists of Brevard** wish to welcome you to our practice. We consider this to be a very enjoyable specialty because our patients are generally healthy women eagerly awaiting the arrival of their babies. We believe that good communication and an environment of mutual respect and cooperation help ensure a healthy mother and baby.
2. As you may be aware, there has been a rise in malpractice claims against doctors, some valid and some frivolous. This increase in lawsuits has resulted in a huge increase in malpractice insurance rates for all obstetricians. Because of often impossibly high malpractice insurance rates, some obstetricians have stopped delivering babies. The climate of medical malpractice today demands that the patient be as informed as possible of potential, but unlikely, problems that may occur from pregnancy. Pregnancy is a normal process for women, but there is always the possibility of complications. These infrequent problems may happen with or without warning, often despite our best efforts to prevent them. We want to educate you and your partner about these possibilities so that you may be more prepared in the very unlikely event that you develop such a problem.
3. The patient's lifestyle is an important part of her health, pregnant or not. Obesity, smoking, poor eating habits, drug abuse, and not getting enough exercise may cause complications in both the mother and her developing child. The patient is responsible for her lifestyle choices. About 3% to 4% of all babies are born with birth defects. Smoking, medications, street drugs, over the counter medications, alcohol, viruses and fevers, complications of other medical conditions such as diabetes, and problems passed on in families are some of the causes of these. Often there is no identifiable reason. Stillbirth is rare, but when it does happen there is often no obvious cause.
4. During the first few months of pregnancy, nausea and vomiting are a common problem. Occasionally, it becomes severe enough for a hospital stay. Miscarriage occurs in about 20% of pregnancies. Bleeding may or may not be a sign of this. Pregnancy loss after the first trimester is less common and may occur for reasons that are unknown and unavoidable. The loss of an early pregnancy may require surgery, such as a D & C, to prevent infection or blood loss.

5. Ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy that remains and grows in the fallopian tube instead of the uterus. If this is allowed to proceed, rupture of the tube will occur. Abdominal pain, vaginal bleeding, and even shoulder pain, occurring in the first trimester of pregnancy, may be indications of ectopic pregnancy. This should be promptly reported to your physician. Medication can treat this condition in the very early stages. However, sometimes surgery to remove the tube and ovary is necessary to prevent serious hemorrhage or death.
6. Medical problems such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and herpes require special attention in pregnancy. Pregnancy can make some of these problems worse. It is important for the patient who has a medical condition to work with her doctors to become as healthy as possible before becoming pregnant. This may include exercising, losing weight and/or changing medications. Infections of the bladder or kidney can be common in pregnancy. Less common are infections within the uterus during pregnancy. Any infection that can happen before pregnancy can happen during pregnancy.
7. Preeclampsia is a complication of pregnancy characterized by high blood pressure, protein in the urine, and retention of fluid, which causes swelling of the hands and feet and headache. These symptoms should be promptly reported to your physician. This condition can usually be managed as an outpatient, but sometimes, hospitalization is required. The treatment is delivery of the infant. Strict management includes bed rest, diet, and medications. This is necessary to allow time for the unborn infant to sufficiently mature for a safe delivery. Eclampsia is the more serious complication, which can develop from preeclampsia. It is characterized by uncontrollable high blood pressure, convulsions, and coma. Hospitalization, medication, and delivery of the infant are the treatments.
8. Problems later in pregnancy can include heavy bleeding due to problems with the placement of the placenta (afterbirth) or an early separation of the placenta from the inside of the uterus. Other problems that can only happen in pregnancy include problems with the baby's growth, babies born too early, and problems with interactions between the baby's blood and the mother's. Pregnant women are prone to veins, phlebitis, and blood clots.

9. Cesarean section is major surgery that can be life saving when necessary. Cesarean section may be needed for many reasons: the baby may not do well in labor, the baby may not be head first, the baby may not be fitting through the birth canal properly. Many of the problems mentioned earlier can result in cesarean section. Cesarean section can be associated with infectious complications and/or injury to surrounding organs that may require further surgery or treatment. Occasionally forceps or a vacuum cup is needed to help deliver the baby's head. When indicated they can be life saving for the baby. Properly used they can usually cause no problems but can leave a mark on the baby that will go away. It is very rare, but there can be injuries to the baby's head, even with proper use. These instruments are not used unless the benefits outweigh any risk. Any women can have tears of the vagina, rectum or uterus in the childbirth process. Sometimes women develop a large bruise of the pelvic area that may require surgery for proper healing. The afterbirth usually comes out in one piece; however, small fragments can remain inside and cause bleeding and infection. Very rarely, there is such heavy bleeding after delivery, either vaginal or by cesarean section, that a blood transfusion or hysterectomy may be needed to save a life. Usually, stitches of the vagina and bottom heal quickly. Occasionally there may be an infection or poor healing in that area that requires treatment
10. Anesthesia also has risks. Women may be allergic to or have reactions to the medications used. General anesthesia can result in aspiration pneumonia. Patients receiving medications of any kind can have a reaction, allergic or otherwise. Blood transfusions (given only when absolutely needed) can result in bad reactions or infections transmitted by blood.

To attempt to list every single emergency or complication is impossible. This “informed consent” is not intended to alarm the patient, only to remind the patient that life and pregnancy are not without risk. We ask that you and your partner acknowledge the receipt of this information with your signatures. This document will become part of your record. We shall be happy to answer any questions you might have. You may request a copy of this document for your personal records.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____