

Techniques For Pushing During Second Stage



—LOVING ARMS—
CHILDBIRTH SERVICES

The second stage of labor extends from the time the cervix reaches full dilation to the birth of the baby. This may take anywhere from fifteen minutes to three hours or more. Some women are fortunate to have a brief resting phase between “transition” and “pushing” while the uterus tightens around the baby’s body after the head has passed through the cervix. These contractions feel weak to nonexistent compared to the intensity of transition. Other women begin to feel sensations urging them to “bear down” or “push” even before the cervix is fully open. There are times when it is best to avoid pushing and other times when it is indicated. Wait until your caregiver has checked your progress before you begin the following pushing techniques.

POSITIONING

- Experiment to find the position most comfortable and efficient for you.
- If you feel no sensation to push and are unanesthetized, try a supported squat position to encourage the “urge”.
- Remember - you are using only your abdominal (voluntary) and uterine (involuntary) muscles for pushing, so position yourself so you can **relax all other muscles** in your arms, shoulders, legs, face, etc.
- Round your body into a “C” position

BREATHING

- **To Avoid Pushing:** When either the cervix is not fully dilated, or when the baby’s head emerges at birth, it may be necessary to blow or “puff” repeatedly when you feel your body starting to push.
- **To Push Effectively:** Use **spontaneous pushing** when the mother is not anesthetized and has strong pushing urges. Begin with a cleansing breath. Use any breathing pattern you like as the

contraction builds. When the pushing urge comes, make “birthing” or “grunting” sounds while *slowly exhaling* with the bearing down effort. Three to five efforts will be made across the peak of each contraction, as your body commands. End with a cleansing breath.

Use **direct pushing** if mother is anesthetized, if baby’s descent is too slow or if the hospital routine dictates. Begin each contraction with a cleansing breath. As the contraction builds, breathe in and out two more times. On the third breath in, hold your breath, but not for more than 6 seconds at a time (a fast count to ten). After your labor partner has counted to ten, blow out quickly and take another breath, hold and push. Repeat until the contraction subsides. When the contraction is over, take a cleansing breath and rest.

PUSHING STRATEGIES

- If you are having trouble finding the right direction to push, have your labor attendant put a glove or a compress on your perineum and instruct you to “push here”.
- Try to feel what is happening inside your body and visualize your baby moving down the birth canal. Your labor nurse or doctor may do perineal massage to help the tissues stretch. Push into his or her touch while releasing the pelvic floor muscles (practicing perineal massage ahead of time may help). Think - open, oooooopen!
- Try to push in a slow and steady manner (like putting your foot to the accelerator of a car).

TIPS TO REMEMBER

- Open your eyes to see the birth of your baby!
- Relax perineum.
- Push with uterus and abdomen, not with arms, legs and jaw!

