

Natural Birth vs. Birthing Naturally

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—LOVING ARMS—
CHILDBIRTH SERVICES

Natural childbirth has been defined in many ways. Some think natural childbirth means a vaginal birth. To others, it means no drugs were used. To others, it means the woman did not accept an epidural. And to others it means squatting in a rice paddy to give birth (and then going back to work!).

The trouble with defining terms is that it often limits the interpretation. So let's reframe your thinking about the word 'natural'. Just by switching the word around you can think differently about the term. Birthing naturally can also mean different things to different. That's the beauty of having choices. But what is being suggested here is that you consider these ways to birth 'naturally'.

Create your own natural method by using your own natural resources, natural flow and natural comforts. Finding the right blend of strategies that works best for you is the key. Think about what combination of natural resources, natural, flow and natural comforts that will help you to achieve the goal of birthing naturally. Those will be your personal natural methods. Its your body, your baby, your decision and now your method of coping that should be everyone's focus

NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Your body was made to do this job. Your anatomy and physiology is wonderfully designed to make, carry and birth your baby. Your body will send you messages- you just need to be open to hearing. Listening to your gut really applies in this case. What a body you have so be confident in it.
2. Your body releases special hormones called endorphins to help combat the pain of birth. By keeping you as relaxed as possible, your team can reduce the amount of adrenalin that may be released in labor (through fear and anxiety) which channels out your endorphins. So try to benefit from relaxation by communicating and cooperating with your birth team throughout labor!
3. Your body has specific areas full of acupressure and reflexology points (especially the hands and feet) and when touched or held or massaged during labor, you feel less pain. You don't need to have an expert in the room to benefit from this ancient form of pain relief. So ask for a hand massage or soak your feet in scented water while laboring.
4. Your body has certain places that when massaged contractions pick up but feel less painful. One is called the 'Ho-ku' point. Using the thumb on top and the pointer finger on the bottom, place fingers on the meaty area between the opposite hand's webbed area (between the thumb and the pointer). Press steadily into the bone at the base of the index finger for 10- 15 second intervals with brief rests in between until the contraction is over. It is a sensitive spot so it may hurt when pressure is applied. Also try the inner aspect of the ankle - 3 or 4 finger widths above the ankle bone called 'Spleen 6'. Press with one finger on the 'sweet pain' spot (slightly behind the bone) also using 10 -15 second intervals with brief rests in between. This can be done however often the woman wants it. Be open to different methods of pain relief.
5. Your body has 'hairless' parts (lips, soles of the feet, palms, of the hands) and when they are stimulated during labor, you feel less pain. Many women are quite oral during birth - wanting lip gloss, popsicles and even kisses. Moms often march in place with bare feet on the cool linoleum or grip their partner's hand rhythmically. So lick your lips often and squeeze stress balls during contractions.
6. Your bodies largest organ in the skin. Its nerve endings are very close to the surface so we sense hot, cold, sharp, etc. instantaneously. This contributes to our safety and survival as humans. If the skin is stimulated by touch, pressure, massage, vibration, warmth, cold and/or water, during labor, for example, you will feel less pain from the contraction. The Gate control theory kicks in and reduces the amount of pain you feel from the contraction traveling along deeper nerve pathways to get to the brain. After receiving the skin's messages, the brain begins assimilating those stimuli. So by the time the pain arrives, the brain is busy; a gate drops and less pain gets in. so get in the Jacuzzi during the most intense part of labor!

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NATURAL FLOW

Have you ever noticed that all of nature is repetitive? The patterns of the waves, the cycles of the moon, the changing of the seasons, the mating behavior of animals - just to name a few. So why not use rhythm to enhance your own birth? If you allow yourself to feel the freedom of your birth groove, your natural flow will take over. That means you need to be a woman, not a lady, to give birth. If you want to moan or grunt or verbalize rhythmically during a contraction, it often helps. So don't worry about how you sound - just express yourself however you need to. Many women find listening to music or repetitive sounds to be helpful too. Movement can also add to the rhythmical nature of birth. Women often march in place or wiggle their hips or sway their body during contractions. These are normal ways of self soothing. Rocking back and forth when experiencing gas pain, for example, seems to be a natural response because it is repetitive, thus soothing. Swaying back and forth can calm a fussy baby because it is rhythmical thus calming. Get the idea? So listen to your body's messages.

NATURAL COMFORTS

When people are asked what things bring them comfort, many answers are given...a beautiful sunset, their Grandmother's chicken noodle soup, being wrapped in a down blanket, a favorite stuffed animal, certain kind of music, soft candlelight, a good book, the smell of bread baking, a fluffy pillow or warm chocolate chip cookies, for instance. Think about what might bring you comfort while in labor. Use your five senses to figure out what might you more comfortable. Then, you will be more relaxed, less worried about the pain and more confident in the process. Making that space yours - more homey and safe - should be a priority to set all that in motion. So consider the following list when putting your birth bag together.

BIRTH BAG SUGGESTIONS

- Camera(s)/Film Batteries
- CD Player/ Batteries/iPOD
- Aromatherapy (mint and citrus are generally non-offensive)
- Plastic spoons and straws
- Snack/drinks (for both)
- Chapstick/lipgloss (unflavored)
- Sour lollipops/candy sticks (sugar = energy)
- Mouthwash or breath freshener
- Fan (hand or battery operated/batteries)
- Instant cold pack/ice wrap
- Brush/ hair ties
- Hot water bottle/ instant hot pack
- Rice sock (microwave on high for 3 minutes)
- Small spritzer bottle (plain/scented water to refresh body/room)
- Socks (dark color so bodily fluids aren't noticeable)
- Massage Cream/Lotion/Cornstarch
- Wooden/textured/vibrating massagers
- Tennis ball (for massage); 3 balls in a sock covers more area
- 2 Stress balls (for hand massage)
- 2 small pocket combs (for acupressure points on palms - right across the middle)
- Small stuffed animal (for comforting tactile stimulation)
- Sea Bands™ (for nausea)
- Mirror (to view baby's head)
- Focal point(s)
- Kneeling pads
- Birth Vision (vs. Birth Plan)
- Paper/Pen
- Parking/Meal \$\$\$
- Cell phones and chargers
- Notes (Labor and Breastfeeding)
- Religious/Cultural/Personal items

Also Bring:

- Birthing Ball
- Bed/Body pillows (not in white cases)
- Mom's clothes for labor/personal belongings)
- Change of clothes/Swimsuit for partner