

For Partners: How To Offer Support In Different Stages Of Labor



—LOVING ARMS—
CHILDBIRTH SERVICES

EARLY LABOR:

- Maintain a protected environment. Limit texts/calls
- Ignore it as much as possible until you can't!
- Encourage the pregnant person to eat & drink normally
- Pack snacks for hospital or birth center: Broth, herbal teas, saltines, yogurt, fruit, juice, raspberry leaf tea ice chips, etc.
- Alternate walks with rest, sleep if possible/find distractions (movie, bake, meet a friend, read a book)
- Enjoy a warm bath (if contractions stop it wasn't really labor)
- Remind them to go to bathroom every hour and to sip liquids every 15 min. throughout labor
- Stay home AS LONG AS POSSIBLE!

ACTIVE LABOR:

- Touch & massage: try different types, gentle to firm. May use massage oil massage feet, back, shoulders down the legs, hands or hold firmly during contractions – let pregnant person guide you
- Back Labor – apply counterpressure to sacrum with palms, press upper sides of pelvic bones together “tushy squeeze”
- Breathing: Help them continue to breathe on own rhythm, if they hold their breath use eye contact to help them find rhythm again – any rhythmic movements may help
- Eye Contact: If they are feeling panicked, may help them stay calm
- Verbal Assurance: Try different ways; You are doing great, You really let your shoulders slump, I love you, Our baby is coming! Or in a singsong voice, slowly; “ Breathing”. Pause...“Surrendering” Pause...“Melting”. Pause...“Releasing”...
- Some birthing persons want everyone to be quiet and not talk!!
- Sounds: Remind them to relax their mouth & jaw, neck & shoulders. Direct low sounds down through the body and out..make sounds along with them if it helps. Sounds direct energy down, just as baby moves down...Encourage them to be uninhibited!
- Water: Soak in tub, stand or sit in shower on stool or birth ball (turn off bathroom lights, use battery candles)
- Body temperature and distraction: Place cool wet cloths on their forehead, back of neck or warm ones if preferred. Warm blankets are comforting and heating pads, rice socks or ice packs may be comforting.
- Liquids: Offer more and more often; water, juice, tea, coconut water, slushes, ice chips. Powdered electrolytes can be added to water.
- Continue reminding them to go to bathroom once an hour
- Changes of position (unless labor is precipitous) very important! Help them to utilize gravity: Walking, standing, supported squats, leaning on bed or stool, kneeling, hands & knees....
- Encourage movement: walk, sway, squat, dance, circles on the ball, asymmetric lunges
- For posterior baby/back labor: All fours, asymmetric kneeling and lunges, lifting belly while doing pelvic tilts, any asymmetric position including walking stairs
- Music: Music can change the feeling in the room..it can get everyone moving or
- provide a calm environment as well as increasing energy. Singing can help everyone stay positive!
- Visualizations: Particularly helpful for relaxation and to get through any difficult moments...The safe place visualization any time, or simply imagining riding ocean waves or watching a flower open to the sun...
- Focal point: Some birthing folks like to use a favorite picture to focus on during contractions
- Aromatherapy
- If pain medication is asked for get checked first! Once an epidural is working help them get settled to nap, continue paying attention, they may enjoy a shoulder or foot massage. Help them change positions, use peanut ball, rock their hips. Remember they are still in labor!

For Partners: How To Offer Support In Different Stages Of Labor, Continued.



TRANSITION:

- Birthing person needs your total concentration and attention (this is not the time to leave the room). Contractions may be one on top of another with hardly any time in-between, or have two peaks
- Eye contact may be essential and birthing person may not change positions much
- Continue being encouraging, " You ARE doing it" if doubt/fear is expressed
- Hands-on support usually should be continuous
- Breath and sounding support may also be needed
- Rectal pressure may begin

PUSHING:

- Encourage them to change positions: squatting, sitting, kneeling, all fours, lying on side with top leg held up, sitting on toilet
- Encourage them to go with whatever their body intuitively says to do with the breath. Controlled release of air, and/or grunting, sounds may work better than holding the breath on someone else's count. Sounds help direct the energy down and out
- A warm cloth on rectum and perineum relieves the pressure of pushing. Perineal massage with oil and/or a very warm cloth held on the perineum gives pushing focus and helps slow things down to prevent tearing
- Apply cool cloths on forehead and fan them between contractions
- Offer ice chips/water
- Encourage them to close eyes and rest between pushes.
- Keep the energy calm during pushing with quiet voices and no counting or yelling if possible.