

Don't be afraid to make a noise, don't feel like you shouldn't. It is well known that making a noise is an effective form of pain relief. Children make a noise all the time, when they are hurt. Learn from them and go with it!

You may be in labour for a long time. Find some distractions in the early stages, such as a book, music, tv, DVD or baking. Waiting for contractions creates tension.

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Labour, how does it work? **know how**



Oxytocin is the hormone which triggers your contractions and keeps them coming. Oxytocin is also known as the hormone of love. At the same time, your body produces another hormone, prostaglandin, which helps softening the neck of your womb (the cervix) to help it to open up (dilate) to allow your baby to come through to be born. This is how your body makes labour happen. Your body does also produce its own painkillers, endorphins, to help you cope with labour. Endorphins not

only reduce the pain you are feeling, they also reduce stress and make you feel good. Unfortunately, fear upsets the amazing and complex process of labour. Fear, makes your body release another hormone, adrenaline. Adrenaline slows down the production of oxytocin. When you are feeling tense, your contractions are less efficient and you will feel more pain. Tension makes labour longer and more painful. Being relaxed and calm is the key to coping with labour!

Knowledge about labour can reduce your fear about it.

Break the fear – tension – pain cycle!

Breathing

S.O.S

You might breathe really fast or hold your breath when you are frightened. More adrenaline will be released and labour gets more painful. When you are breathing slowly it will be easier for you to be calm and relaxed. Also your baby will be supplied with more oxygen. To calm yourself during and between contractions, take a deep breath in through your nose and sigh out slowly (S.O.S.) through your mouth.



Movement and positions

Use gravity to help you during labour and birth. Also, empty your bladder hourly. Both, being upright and an empty bladder maximises your body's ability to give birth. Movement, like walking or a good wiggle may help speed up labour.



movement

empty your bladder

off your bottom

Choosing birth partners



It is important to have the right person / people with you during labour and birth. Birth partners can be more important than pain relief. When choosing your birth partner(s) think about:

- ⇒ Who calms you down when you are anxious?
- ⇒ Who has a calming influence and makes you feel loved?
- ⇒ Who don't you mind seeing you when you are in pain, upset, worried and naked?
- ⇒ Who wouldn't mind seeing you during labour and has the strength to support you during labour?

The right birth partner for you might be your partner, mother, sister a friend, a doula or more than one person. Even if you do not wish to be touched during labour, knowing that your birth partner is there might help.

Try to work with the pain rather than against it.

love & support

The birth space

To make your birth space your own and make it as comfortable as possible you might wish to take your own pillow(s), blanket(s), music (e.g. i-pod), drinks and snacks (comfort food). It might also help to change & adjust the lighting in the room or the room temperature. You may also ask for equipment e.g. birth ball.



Make the birth space your own!

YOUR space

Rest or sleep

You will need your energy for the later stages of labour. Try to sleep or rest during early labour.



sleep or rest



TENS (Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation)
A TENS machine is a device that transmits mild electric impulses to pads on your back. This blocks the pain signals and helps your body to release endorphins.

TENS

Labour is hard work, but you can do it!

When making decisions, remember to ask your

What are the **Benefits**?
What are the **Risks**?
What are the **Alternatives**?
What do my **Instincts** tell me?
What if we do **Nothing** for a while?



B.R.A.I.N.

Complementary therapies

There are many types of complementary therapies available:

Acupuncture, aromatherapy (available in most birth units) homeopathy, massage, self-hypnosis and yoga.

relax



Water (Hydrotherapy)

water

Water is a drug-free form of pain relief in labour. It works best when you can get your bump covered. Also, make sure the water is warm but not hot. But, sometimes, water can slow down labour, especially if used too early.



Hot / cold packs

hot or cold

Heat or cold may help you to cope with labour. They can be applied to the lower abdomen, lower back, back and perineum.



What can birth partners do to help?

Partners can help the mother in labour by expressing their love, eye-contact, breathing with her, encouragement, patience, confidence and their undivided attention. Help with decisions and asking questions.

birth partners, what to do?

