



Your important health information

Troubleshooting for partners and support people

Supporting your loved one in labour requires both physical and emotional strength plus a deep understanding of you and your partner's expectations, desires and beliefs with regard to birth.

Prepare for this part of the journey with open and honest communication about your concerns and fears. Read widely and be well informed about your choices and possible outcomes. Have a contingency plan for the "What ifs".

Having an understanding of your partner's expectations will enable you to confidently advocate for her when the need arises.

We recommend a maximum of two support people in the hospital birthing room at any one time. Nominate a central family member to contact the hospital for information. This member can then be the central contact for the rest of the family and friends.

Meeting Emotional Needs

- Be positive and encouraging
- Be enthusiastic
- Maintain a calm environment
- Be supportive of all behaviours that your partner displays

Physical Needs

Later in labour you will need to anticipate your partner's needs. She will be using all her energy to focus, often inwardly, on the job she is doing. Verbal cues may be conflicting or absent so learn her non-verbal cues and body language. How does she indicate stress now? Watch for the clenched fist, tightened jaw. Know a helpful response to her when she displays those signals.

Special ways to assist during labour:

- If labour begins at night and is mild, help her rest and hopefully sleep
- If labour begins during the day, you may go to a place you both enjoy where you can get used to labour together
- Keep in close, relaxed contact with her
- Encourage her to eat as long as possible, prepare (or buy) her favourite foods
- Encourage her to keep drinking – iced water, cordial, non acidic fruit juice
- Massage hands, feet, back legs, head. Practice this through pregnancy
- Heat hot pack in microwave to put on tummy or back
- Suggest position changes and assist her to move into them
- Encourage pelvic rocking, swaying
- Play relaxing music and change it as necessary
- Cold washer or water spray for neck and face – it's hot work
- Encourage regular bladder emptying
- As labour progresses, remind her to let her body "go limp" between contractions and stroke her gently to reassure her.

Special ways to assist during labour (continued):

- Breathe with her if she starts to panic – in through the nose...out through the mouth
- Don't be embarrassed to use your usual endearments with your midwives around; she needs to hear them from you!
- Don't be alarmed if she pushes you away or snaps at you as labour progresses – her body is working hard
- Speak tenderly to her between contractions, and maintain eye contact where possible especially when the contractions are become really intense toward the end of 1st stage
- Once she is pushing, the closeness of your body allows her to feel your reinforcement
- Let her know when you can see the baby's head, help her reach down and touch it or hold a mirror so she can see it if desired
- Tell her you love her, especially after the baby has arrived

Answers to some commonly asked questions

When do I take her to hospital?

- Add the hospital's labour and birth contact number to your mobile phone:
 - **Mercy Hospital for Women: 8458 4058**
 - **Werribee Mercy Hospital: 8754 3400**
- Phone the Birth Suite when contractions start or if her waters break. Midwives will guide you about when to come in
- Be guided by the labouring woman – they often are the best judge of when to come in
- Know the route to the hospital and have a backup one in case of heavy traffic or detours
- Plan who will look after other children or pets while you are away
- If you have other support people, keep them informed

What can I do if she feels sick in labour?

Nausea is a side effect of the body's natural pain relievers called endorphins which are secreted in labour.

- Encourage her to crunch on ice
- Cold washer for the face or back of neck
- Lots of encouraging words to remind her and yourself that this is normal
- If she has vomited, help her rinse her mouth

How can I help her cope with the pain?

Pain in labour is normal and whilst you can't remove it, you can help it. Help her change positions, use equipment e.g. birth ball, bean bag, walk, sway, do pelvic rocking and kneeling

- Help her into the shower or bath – warm water can help the pain
- Make sure she rests between contractions
- Remind her she is making excellent progress
- Avoid setting time limits and putting her under pressure to have the baby by a certain time
- You may feel helpless or scared by the pain ...so take regular breaks and keep your strength up by eating and drinking
- Keep in close communication with the midwife – she is there to support you as well

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact Parent Education:

Mercy Hospital for Women Phone: 8458 4152

Werribee Mercy Hospital Phone: 8754 3412

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