

Self-help ideas to help cope with early labour

Early labour, also known as the *latent phase*, can last from a few hours to several days. Listed below are some self-help items that you might like to prepare at home ahead of time, to help you cope with this important stage of your labour.

- Paracetamol
- TENS machine
- Exercise ball
- Energy sweets / drinks / snacks
- Hot water bottle & cover / heat pack
- Massage oil
- Music play list – for relaxation & distraction



EARLY LABOUR SUPPORT IN 6 EASY STEPS

1

Environment

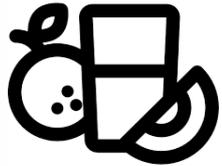
Dim the lights and create a warm, quiet and cosy place with cushions and blankets. Instead of focusing on each contraction it is best to find a distraction, such as relaxing music, a movie, going for a walk or playing a game.



2

Basic Needs

Encourage to drink plenty, especially water, squash and isotonic sports drinks. If she feels up to eating try bread, crackers, banana, biscuits, cereal, breakfast bars or jelly babies. Encourage her to go to the toilet regularly to help baby move down and ease intensity of contractions.



3

Rest and Exercise

A balance of rest and exercise and is best. Movement can ease the pain and help labour progress. Try walking, swaying, rocking or bouncing on a birthing ball. To rest, lay on your left side with a cushion between the knees and under the bump, or kneel while leaning over the sofa or bed. It may not be possible to sleep, but resting between contractions helps.



4

Breathing Exercises

Take a long, slow, deep breath in through the nose, really filling the lungs to the count of five. Then slowly blow the air out through the mouth again to the count of five. Repeat this all the way through the contraction.



5

Pain Relief

Paracetamol can help to ease contractions, read and follow instructions inside the packet. Take a warm bath or shower. If possible, have the bump under the water or the water running over it. For back pain, running water or a hot water bottle helps. Changing position eases contractions and helps labour progress, especially upright positions like standing, sitting, squatting or kneeling. Massage is a great way to help the woman relax, either with the contraction or in between. It can also help labour progress. A TENS machine can also help. If you don't have one it may be possible to loan one from the Rushey birthing unit.



6

When to Call

When having strong, regular contractions every 3-4 minutes, lasting around 60 seconds, if baby's movements change or stop, the waters break, there is bleeding, if struggling with contractions or you have any other concerns.

