

What to do during the birth process

Break the fear: Panic=Tension=Increased pain.

This leaflet outlines some activities to help break the cycle of 'Panic=Tension=Pain' during labour. Consult your midwife if you have any medical conditions before using any of these suggestions.

Movement

- With feet hip width apart and knees gently bent - stand, dance, circle the hips or sway.
- Walk, climb stairs sideways with partner supporting you to widen the pelvis and help the baby descend in the birth canal.
- Sit or gently bounce on a birth or exercise ball with your partner supporting you.
- Lean or sway against the birth ball by placing it between your back and a wall.
- Focus on the movement not the powerful contraction.
- Match any movement to the pace of your breathing.
- Try to keep your knees lower than your bottom in any position that you adopt.
- Use a mat on the floor and kneel on all fours.

Breathing

- Focus on keeping the inward and outward breath soft and steady.
- Breathe in through the mouth and slowly blow the breath away as you keep your lips soft and rounded.
- Gently blow the breath out in a rhythm, 1, 2, 3 like a blowing a candle out.
- Blow the breath away as though you are blowing a feather or ping pong ball away.
- As you progress and the contractions get stronger, slightly increase the pace of your breathing at the height of a contraction. 'HA HA PHOOOO 1, 2, 3'. Then slow down as the contraction fades away. Don't breathe too fast or you will feel light headed.
- If you feel that you want to push before your cervix is fully open try blowing out strongly through pursed lips. Find the pattern of breathing that suits you. Remember, everyone is different. These are just suggestions.
- Focus on your breathing not the pain.

Sound

- Sigh or hum.
- Say “Ooooooowwww” and link this with your movement.
- Say “Aaahhh”, either long and soft or short and strong.
- Focus on the sound not the pain.

Hands and legs

- Keep hands relaxed not clenched.
- Tap, pat or slap (gently!) on your thighs.
- Count while patting your hands.
- Shake your hands loosely.
- Roll the birth ball backwards and forwards while your partner or midwife stands near to support you.
- While kneeling on all fours flap your feet up and down or wiggle your toes.
- March on the spot or pace up and down.

Visualisations

- Focus on something real such as a picture, spot on the wall or flower, your partner.
- Focus on an internal image such as the baby moving down.
- Imagine a colour for the pain.
- Imagine a colour for resting.
- Imagine a shape for the pain and relaxation.

Words

- Can be spoken by you, your partner or the midwife.
- Can be used with movement and rhythm.
- “Keep moving” “Come on baby” “Well done”.
- A powerful strong contraction brings your baby closer.
- “Let it come....feel its power...you are strong...now it’s gone.”

Aromatherapy

- Talk to your midwife to obtain the most suitable essential oil and fragrance.

Support

- Make sure you have someone with you to support and encourage you, either by helping you with the above suggestions or by utilising massage techniques. This will help to reduce your anxiety and promote a positive experience.

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

MAT_1427

Reviewed: August 2019 (Consultant Midwife)

Approved Maternity Information Group & Patient Information Manager, September 2019

Review date: September 2021