

- Be there for her and love her.
- Be present, stay off your phone if she desires it.
- Talk to her (unless she asks you to be quiet). She needs you to affirm her and remind her that she is doing a beautiful job of birthing your baby. Be positive and encouraging while at the same time acknowledging her pain and fatigue.
- If she has asked you to set up the birth space/pool do so.
- Don't take anything personally. She may want you to rub her back or touch her one contraction and be too stimulated the next and tell you to leave her alone. Labor is stimulating and often makes it harder to communicate.
- Do not make jokes or make fun of her or her body during labor. She is precious, treat her as such.

Early Labor

During the Day: Remind her to go about her day as usual. Eat meals as normal, stay hydrated and check to make sure all birth items are where they should be. If baby feels like they are in wonky position or there is back labor remind her to do a round of Spinning Babies movements. If labor is going to progress into active labor it will do so without wearing herself out walking miles or deep cleaning. Remind her that she needs to keep her strength for active labor.

Evening/During the Night: Rest, rest, rest! Rest until she can no longer. There is no benefit to staying up all night if she can rest/sleep between contractions. Remember, labor can be 3 hours long or 48 hours, both are both intense and need rest to make it through.

When to Call in Labor

The typical answer is when contractions are 5 minutes apart from start of contraction to start of the next contraction and lasting at least 60 seconds from the start of one contraction until its end. Some good signs of active labor is no longer speaking during contractions, duration and severity increases, pain starts in back and moves to front and bloody show.

However, not all contraction patterns become regular. If she feels like she needs to push, her water breaks or she has a "feeling" that something is happening/wrong **always call**.

Comfort Measures in Labor

- **Relaxation:** this is key. If she is tensing, place your hand on her and gently remind her to release. Common areas of tension are the face, neck, shoulders, hands and toes.
- **Physical Touch:** Hold her hand, rub her back or shoulders, wipe her face, cuddle, etc. Even if she does not desire touch remain close so you may be a pillar of support without physical contact.
- **Fluids:** Remind her to sip water or electrolytes frequently. She is breathing heavy and working hard. Dehydration is common for laboring mamas.
- **Elimination:** Remind her to use the restroom every half hour to hour. An empty bladder helps baby descend.
- **Moaning:** If making noise seems to help her, guide her to make low, moaning sounds versus high pitched noises. Low moans help the body relax.
- **Positions:** Suggest different positions for her to try such as side lying, hands and knees, walking, lunges, slow dance, rocking on all 4's, sitting on the birth ball, etc
- **Warm Water:** Water is amazing at helping a mom during labor. Shower anytime. Being submerged in a pool of water is most helpful during heavy active labor and transition - your midwife will help you know when.
- **Heat:** Try warm compresses, a heating pad or a rice sock on her lower belly or lower back to help ease pain and muscle spasms. Sometimes a **cold** wet washcloth on her forehead or neck feels good - especially in the pool.
- **Pray with her:** Or talk to her, encourage her, read affirmations to her. You may feel like you are saying the same things over and over again, but she needs to hear you believe in her. She is relying on your strength and belief that she can do this.
- **For Backache:** Try counter pressure, hands and knees position, pelvic rocking, walking, slow dancing, hot or cold pack, shower, standing sacral release, spinning babies exercises.