

## Tips for Labour

- Once you realise labour has begun, try to RELAX! Have a bath, eat something or try to get some rest, do some gentle yoga moves, but whatever you do don't panic. Doing so can release adrenaline-like hormones which can actually slow down labour.
- Try to stay at home for as long as possible. Only head for the hospital when contractions are 4 – 5 minutes apart (measure this time from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next).
- If you have a birth plan or any particular requests relating to your labour, discuss them with the hospital staff when you arrive. Good communication is important.
- Deal with each contraction one at a time.
- Remember to stay with the breath – don't hyperventilate and don't stop breathing! Let the breath be a focus for your awareness.
- Use the time between contractions to rest and relax as fully as you can, focusing on the out breath.
- Take sips of water or an isotonic drink between contractions. It's important not to dehydrate. And have snacks on hand in case you feel hungry.
- During the first stage of labour, feel free to move around and use positions that feel right for you. Upright positions aid the downward movement of your baby.
- If at any stage during labour you are presented with options or a decision by your midwife or obstetrician (eg. If they want to break your waters or suggest you take some form of pain relief), don't feel you have to make a decision on the spot. Ask for some time to talk things through with your partner.
- If you are unhappy with anything that is happening, tell someone. Or have your partner speak on your behalf.
- During the second stage of labour, bear down because you have to, not because someone tells you do. Push with as much pressure as you comfortably can, not with all your might and you're blue in the face. This neither necessary nor healthy.
- Try to keep your jaw relaxed. This is said to help the cervix open up.
- Make a sound if that feels like a natural thing for you to do. Doing so can release endorphin-like hormones which can reduce pain. Try not to be inhibited about the sounds you make during labour!
- Don't feel that you should be able to stay in control. Giving birth is the most wild and primal thing you'll ever do so it's ok to go a little crazy. There will be moments when you may feel you can't do it or you're out of control. That's normal!
- Try to maintain some sense of connection with your baby – there are 2 of you involved in the process.
- If labour doesn't go according to plan, don't beat yourself up about it. Be accepting of your experience and whatever you do don't feel guilty!

“When we consider the whole, each woman will know what she needs for her birthing. Whatever decision she makes it is the best decision for her and needs to be respected – that is woman-wise birth” - Maggie Banks, midwife.