

Tips for Labor Partners



Labor partners play a special role during labor. Since there will be a lot going on that day, bring this “tip sheet” with you. Refer to it for ideas to try during the different stages of labor.

Early labor ideas

Early labor is usually a time of happiness and excitement, mixed with some anxiety. During this time, you can:

- Rest with your partner to save energy.
- Offer to touch and massage her.
- Remind her to go to the bathroom at least once each hour.
- Draw a warm bath for her (first check with her health care provider if her water has broken).
- Prepare light snacks and bring her drinks of water.
- Help her to get up and move around, maybe take a walk with her.
- Time contractions and tell your health care provider your progress.
- Involve her in light activities, such as watching a movie or playing cards.
- Tell people who need to know and make arrangements for pets or childcare.
- Share pregnancy and medical history information as well as her wishes for the labor process with her care team.
- Be ready to take photos to be able to look back on this memorable moment!

Active labor and transition ideas

Once contractions become more intense for your partner, help her use the comfort techniques that work best for her. During this time, you can:

- Help her change into different positions. Standing, walking, squatting, getting down on hands and knees, kneeling, slow dancing, sitting, and side-lying are all good options.
- Help her use movement, such as walking, swaying, and pelvic rocking.
- Breathe with her through contractions slowly using mantras with a deep toned voice. Count out loud if she wants you to.
- Guide her in visualization exercises that focus on the baby or special memories.
- Be supportive of the sounds she needs to make during labor. Higher pitched cries could be a sign that she is feeling out of control and needs to focus.
- Help her to cope with nausea, such as giving her ice chips or warm liquids, applying a cold cloth to her forehead, and preparing a toothbrush with toothpaste if she vomits.



- Massage her back, neck, abdomen, or other parts of her body in a way that feels good to her.
- Help her into the tub or shower.
- Help her use the peanut ball to help shorten labor and move baby through the pelvis.
- Encourage her (“You’re doing great” or “You’re breathing really well”) and reassure her with true statements.
- Provide timely updates on progress, options, and positive birthing tools.
- If she has an epidural, help her change from side to side and stay engaged in the birth process together. While she may no longer feel pain, she still needs support.

Back labor ideas

If your partner is experiencing backache in labor, the baby may be facing mom’s front. Try the following tips to ease the aching and encourage the baby to turn:

- Change positions – try squatting, kneeling, leaning forward, the slow dance, or the birth ball.
- Help her into position to do pelvic tilts.
- Apply hot and cold compresses.
- Use your hands to do the double hip squeeze.
- Set up an area for her to do lunges.
- Apply pressure to her kneecaps for the knee press.

Long labor ideas

Labor doesn’t always follow a prescribed course. If labor is taking a long time, you can:

- Change techniques and positions.
- Offer to change the atmosphere in the room by dimming the lights or playing music, or go with her out in the hall or waiting area.
- Help your partner stay hydrated and nourished as allowed.
- Be sure to take care of yourself too! Keep your jaw relaxed as this will help your whole body relax. Rest, eat snacks, and dress warm as the room will likely be cool.

Pushing ideas

Pushing is the light at the end of the tunnel, but there is still hard work to be done. You can:

- Help her stay focused.
- Suggest and help her use different positions (squatting with a bar or on a stool, semi-sitting, hands and knees, sitting on toilet or birthing chair, side-lying, forward-leaning). Be sure to have her change positions every 15 to 20 minutes unless labor is progressing.
- Provide emotional encouragement (“You’re almost there!” “You’re very strong!”).
- Help your partner see her progress by setting up a mirror or letting her know when you can see the baby’s head.
- Hold a cool cloth to her forehead in between pushes.
- Give her ice chips or sips of water.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, go to wexnermedical.osu.edu/patiented or contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or health-info@osu.edu.