

10 Tips for an Easier Labor

By Sasha Tohme
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We asked the experts how mums-to-be can achieve a quicker and less stressful delivery, and here's what they told us...

1. Keep fit

Midwife of 25 years Shea Caplice says childbirth isn't referred to as 'labour' for nothing.

"It's hard work," she says. "So going into labour fit and healthy is one of the most important things you can do.

"You don't know how long your labour is going to be so if you're fit and healthy you're likely to cope better with labour plus the recovery process will also be a lot quicker."

2. Trust your team

Research reveals a good labour support team lowers a woman's risk of medical intervention.

"Surround yourself with people you trust and who are genuinely there for you," Shea says. "It's basically like having your protective circle around you so no matter what happens you have people there for support."

4. Seek alternative relief

Homeopathic coach Sam Adkins says a holistic approach to labour can not only help to speed up the process but also help make it easier.

"Labour is a natural process and natural medicine can help," she says. "Homeopathy works on both an emotional and a physical level, and the right prescribed key remedy can make a real difference.

"There are over 3000 homeopathic remedies so I tend to put together a birth kit that is quite comprehensive. The kit includes a symptom list and the birth partner can scroll down this list during labour and look for which remedy in the kit will help alleviate the problem."

Sam recommends the use of Gelsemium before labour to help reduce feelings of fear or anxiety, Kali Phos 3X Tissue Salts during labour for the treatment of exhaustion, and high strength Arnica immediately after birth to aid in the body's recovery.

5. Pinpoint the pain

The centuries-old tradition of acupuncture is gaining in popularity with pregnant women across the country. Acupuncturist Aja Stuart says pre-birth acupuncture helps to ripen the cervix and soften the pelvic ligaments. "Research shows these treatments not only promote a more efficient labour but are also good for calming any nerves or anxiety," says Aja.

"Acupressure can also be given during labour – it's great for pain relief and promotes a sense of calmness and control for the woman."

6. Make yourself at home

It's no secret that a scary clinical environment can slow down the labour process. A recent UK study revealed that 9 out of 10 women felt physical environment affected the progress of their labour.

Take along some home comforts to the hospital or birth centre to make you feel as comfortable as possible. Little things like a favourite pillow, fluffy towels, scented candles or warm socks can help you feel relaxed. Try to familiarise yourself with the hospital before going into labour so you know where to go and what to expect.

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7. Learn the art of pain mastery

From breathing exercises to stomping and even rhythmic dance and chanting, pain-free-focused activities help women to achieve a faster and more bearable labour.

Physiotherapist and prenatal educator Juju Sundin says it is vital women focus on pain-free techniques and not the pain.

“The ultimate goal as the pain gets really intense is to be so involved in one of these rhythmic pain-free techniques that you get into a zone or flow state with them,” she says.

“It is best to go in informed, educated and prepared, and then apply what works best on the day.”

8. Be prepared

Once you find yourself in the grips of labour it's a little bit late to start reading up on the various stages of childbirth. Educate yourself in advance about the delivery process by reading as much about it as you can before the time comes. Take a childbirth class and ask the tough questions of your doctor or midwife.

9. Keep moving

Experts agree that, if possible, women shouldn't take their labour lying down. Upright positions, including standing, walking, squatting and swaying, all allow gravity to help move the baby down and out through the birth canal.

“It is well established that gravity, movement, different positions and activity all speed labour up and they help to give women a sense of control,” Juju says.

10. You can do it

It is important to remain positive throughout labour. Juju says positive thoughts are a great tool to help women through the early stages of labour.

“Women must understand that they do have resources inside of them. They do exist, we were evolved with them, we were born with them and because the pain is healthy pain we can have a healthy response,” she says.