
Labour and Birth Preparation Checklist for Birth Partner

Updated: January 25, 2009

This checklist has been prepared to give you an idea of the kinds of items commonly required at a labour and birth, and to ensure none of the essentials have been overlooked.

Listed here are the essentials, but the mother may ask for other items at the labour. If (and when) this happens, don't argue, "just do (or delegate) it". To reduce the occurrence of unexpected requests, visualize the labour and birth together, generating a list of anticipated music, beverage, snack, etc. preferences.

Included below are also suggestions for actions you can take to help you and your partner have a smooth, positive birth experience.

ITEMS TO BE PREPARED/PACKED FOR THE HOSPITAL AND TRIP TO THE HOSPITAL

In the car:

- Full gas tank
- Blanket
- Pillow
- Flashlight
- Baby car seat (for trip home)

For the mother during labour:

- Essential oils
- Personal focal point (i.e., "her special place" - a photograph, flower, object)
- Preferred snacks and beverages
- Sweater
- Warm socks and/or slippers
- ipod or mp3 player
- Preferred music selection
- Toothbrush, lip balm and other toiletries

For you during labour:

- Copy of Birth Plan
- Copy of "Labour and Birth Preparation Checklist for Birth Partner"
- Directions to hospital
- Contacts list of persons to be notified at time of labour and time of birth
- Mobile telephone (fully charged)
- Cash and credit card for incidental expenses
- Quarters for pay-telephone
- Camera or video camera (fully charged or with fresh batteries)
- Empty video card or fresh film
- Snacks
- Toiletries and breath mints
- Sweater and/or change of clothes
- Swim clothes if water birth, or whirlpool or shower use planned

For the mother postpartum:

- Gown that opens easily for breastfeeding (unless she prefers a hospital gown)
- Nursing bra
- Snacks
- Ear plugs
- Eye mask
- Grooming supplies
- Sanitary napkins
- Reading and writing materials
- Clothes for trip home

For the baby:

- Receiving blanket
- Diapers
- Clothing for trip home (including undershirt, gown, outside clothing)

ACTIONS TO TAKE TO FOSTER A POSITIVE BIRTH EXPERIENCE

As labour approaches:

- Visualize labour and birth together and generate list of preferred music, beverage, snack, etc. selections
- Prepare above checklist items
- Practice labour breathing and relaxation techniques
- Ensure you are both well rested (daily napping is recommended)
- Remind her how beautiful she is and how much you love her

At onset of labour:

- Remain calm but enthusiastic
- Praise her for her progress to this point
- Remind her you are well prepared and that everything will go well
- Notify appropriate persons on contacts list that labour has commenced (ask someone on the list to buy a daily newspaper as a keepsake, Globe and Mail or New York Times are good choices)
- Encourage frequent fluids and urination
- Help her rest and relax

Stage 1 - early labour:

- Praise her for her progress to this point
- Offer fluids and light foods (e.g., fruit juices, bananas, yogurt, popsicles, Jell-O®, toast with honey or jam, yogurt, vegetable soup)
- Help her rest and relax
- Encourage position changes as needed

Stage 1 - active labour:

- Praise her for her progress to this point
- Ensure a peaceful environment so your partner can focus (i.e., address annoying odours and noises, intrusive pets, chatter)
- Encourage rest between contractions
- Encourage position changes as needed
- Offer ice, water, juices, teas
- Massage and physical comfort measures (e.g., back pressure, hip squeeze, effleurage)
- Maintain eye contact
- Proceed to the hospital when contractions become intense or painful, are 60 seconds long, or come every 5 minutes or less

Stage 1 - transition:

- Never leave her alone (i.e., you or another person must remain in the room with her at all times)
- Praise her for her progress to this point
- Remind her this is the shortest phase of the process, that “she is strong” and that she “can do it”
- Maintain eye contact

Stage 2 - pushing (i.e., the birth):

- Praise her for her progress to this point
- Calmly relay instructions, do not “order”
- Assist her into a comfortable position, be prepared to change positions if progress slows
- Provide physical support (e.g., at legs, shoulders)
- Remind her to keep her jaw relaxed and mouth open
- Breathe with her, and “blow” at crowning
- Enjoy the birth of the baby

Stage 3 - placental delivery:

- Praise her for her handling of the birth of the baby
- Assist her into a comfortable position
- Provide physical support (e.g., at legs, shoulders)
- After placental delivery, notify appropriate persons on contacts list the baby has been born

In the event of complications:

- Stay with your partner and/or baby at all times
- Remain calm and positive
- Ask your caregivers to clearly explain all treatment options
- Ensure you understand all treatment options (i.e., ask questions)

MISCELLANEOUS

Be sure to clarify any questions you may have prior to the labour and birth. It is important that you feel as well-prepared and confident as possible before this potentially stressful, but very natural and manageable event in your lives.

Avoid strong scents (e.g., colognes and perfumes, deodorant, foods and beverages, etc.). Labouring women are particularly sensitive to odours. Do not be offended if your offers of assistance are rejected, your participation and effort are appreciated.

Do not be afraid to take breaks, naps, snacks, etc. - I will cover for you! If at anytime you want to be alone together, if I haven't noticed, do not hesitate to verbalize your wish.

Understand that as a doula, my role is not to replace you, but to help you. I will never get in your way, and will help you both in every way I can.

Sincerely,

Du La
Naturopathic Doctor
Doula