



ASPEN BIRTH CENTER
Where Families Are Born

COPING MEASURES IN LABOR

Movement: *once we have established a good heart rate pattern on your baby, you may be able to walk in the hallways, around the unit or in your room.*

Breathing and Relaxation: *We know you are excited and even a little nervous as your labor progresses. We can help you relax with a couple of breathing techniques. The first works well in early labor – As the contraction starts take a cleansing breath in through your nose and out through your mouth, as the contraction occurs, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth taking nice deep cleansing breaths. When the contraction ends, take another cleansing breath in through your nose and out through your mouth and relax into the bed or chair or*

onto your partner. Progressively relax all of the muscles in your body starting from your neck, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, relax your legs and your feet and toes. Try not to think about the next contraction. Your partner may rub your back or feet slowly between contractions helping you to relax. Try to imagine your body doing what it is supposed to do – the tissues are stretching to make room for your baby's descent and your baby is moving inside of you helping himself to be born.

Another technique you may use when the contractions become stronger as in active labor is the He-He –Hoo breathing: with this technique you take a cleansing breath as before, then you breathe out with the “he” and take a breath quickly before the next “He.” During the “he”, you are exhaling. With the last “Hoo,” you are exhaling longer. This is a patterned breathing style and tends to distract you, and keep you from holding your breath during the contraction.

Don't worry if you don't get this at first, the nurse can help you.

The Jacuzzi Bathtub: Many women find this extremely relaxing in labor. As long as you are not receiving Pitocin or an epidural, this should be fine. We will check your baby's heart beat in the water every 15 min or so. The water also cannot be too hot.

Massage: many women find that a foot rub between contractions feels great. You can use her favorite lotion; we also have aromatherapy drops available that you can use. Long sweeping massage movements down her back are also soothing. Remember coaches to keep your movements slow to compliment her breathing. Some women also find a scalp massage and rubbing the nape of her neck and temples soothing.

Counterpressure: With hip or back pain – as in back labor—it may feel good to have someone rub around your hips as you are standing and leaning on a chair. With back labor, counterpressure with your coach's hand is given on your lower back; you will direct how firm of pressure you need. Counterpressure is usually done during a contraction when the back pressure is at its greatest.

The Labor Ball: *the labor ball is great because you can squat as you are sitting on it opening up your pelvis. Bounce on the ball as you breathe rhythmically through the uterine contractions... We can even bring another ball in and your coach can sit opposite you holding your hands, bounce with you and help you with the breathing. The labor ball can be moved close to the monitor so even if you need to be monitored, you can still use the ball.*

The Rocking Chair: *many women find the relaxation and rhythmic movement in a rocking chair along with the breathing soothing. As you breathe throughout the contraction you can focus on a fixed point in the room, perhaps a picture you have brought or you may prefer to close your eyes. Some laboring women prefer to look at their coach as their coach breathes with them and gives them encouragement.*

Aromatherapy: *If you like aromatherapy and find it soothing, we have mixtures designed for each phase of labor. You can use these directly on your skin or combined with a plain lotion. Most of them contain Lavender.*

Showers: *If you're not in the mood for a Jacuzzi, this might be another option. The sound of the water in the shower is often very relaxing.*

Your Labor bed: *your labor bed is also quite versatile and adjusts to several positions – you can have the head of the bed up and face and lean on it while you are on your knees and your coach can rub your back or give you counterpressure on your back or hips. The foot also drops down.*

More positions in labor: *Leaning against the chair in the room; getting on all fours on the floor with a blanket beneath you (getting off your back is often very helpful); Rocking side to side while breathing through the uterine contractions.*

The Labor Dance: *Face your coach with each one of you bending your knees, place your feet shoulder width apart. As you have a contraction, breath and rock from one side to the other together – this is a helpful dance,*

you will be rocking your baby from side to side this way soon.

If you need to stay in bed: remember that if you need to stay in bed, you can still move side to side and when you need to push you can push on your back with a wedge or on your side. With an epidural, patients can still occasionally squat using a labor bar (depending on how heavy your legs are).

These are all just suggestions, if you feel comfortable lying in the bed just resting between contractions, that is fine as well. Just remember to always stay off your back. At least stay in a tilted position to optimize blood flow to your baby. Staying off your back will also often help you from getting nauseated.

Keep in mind that we are not only taking care of you and your coach, but are also looking after your baby. Occasionally due to a procedure, you will not be able to try certain relaxation techniques. At other times, we may wish to keep a closer eye on the baby so we may require that you be monitored consistently. If the

situation changes and you can change your position, we will let you know.

Also know that if you choose, we have IV medication available with the approval of your careprovider.

You may also have an epidural at any time upon your request with the approval of your careprovider.

Feel free to ask us as many questions as you need. We are here to help you cope with Labor and make this a positive experience for you and your family.

We wish you a Happy and Healthy Delivery!

The Aspen Birth Center Nursing Staff