

## Birth is Physical

Birth is a very physical demanding event that requires extensive mental, physical, and emotional preparation. Interesting fact: Active labor burns 800 calories an hour.

Consider comparing natural labor to running a marathon. Both events are extremely physical and both require mental strength to complete them. If a marathon runner wants to have a positive experience with the event, they will put in a lot of preparation. The same with birth, proper preparation will help provide the desired outcome.

Whether or not a woman plans to labor with medication, she needs some coping techniques and comfort measures in her mental bag of tricks to help her relax. Standard protocol for many labor and delivery units is the delay of administration of the epidural, until the woman measures at least 4 centimeters dilation. Practicing regular relaxation techniques is the key to creating a positive experience even when there is pain present.

## Relaxation

If you want to be in control of your performance, you first have to be in control of yourself, and relaxation is the gateway to understanding and being aware of both your body and your mind. With a natural child birth, that mindset, that attitude, and that understanding of what is going to happen, and how you are going to handle it will really give you a lot of power and confidence in doing it.

***Attending a prenatal class or similar education about labor can be very helpful in the labor process.***

Relaxation is one of the big keys for women in the labor process. If a woman can be relaxed when she's going through the labor process it does seem to make labor go a little bit easier, they tend to dilate a little bit faster, and they tend to get through the most painful part, in a much more enjoyable fashion.

## Breathing

The pain isn't going to go away and you may not be able to block it out, but what you can do is embrace it, and work with the pain. One way to work with the pain is by breathing.

There is no real secret to breathing properly. Effective breathing techniques are very simple. The key is practicing them regularly. Women can get dizzy or lightheaded when they try to learn their breathing techniques for the first time when they're already in labor. You can choose from a couple of different methods.

Deep Abdominal Breathing: inhale to the count of four and exhale to the count of eight

Panting Patterns: two shallow pants followed by an exhaling blow

Slow Breathing: inhaling for as long as you possibly can without interrupting the natural flow of air intake and then releasing the breath with an equally long exhalation

## Defining the Coach's Role

The coach should be as involved as possible in the earlier stages so that he's in the groove once she reaches the more demanding stages of labor. He can be encouraging her, praising her, stroking her hair, or he may need to get

up close to her face and imitate proper breathing. He may tell her to close her eyes, or instruct her to look at a focal point to divert her attention away from her fears.

It's very important for the partner, the father, or birth partner to come well educated about the birth process. The fear in the father, or birth partner, can really make or break the whole labor process as far as for women who have a goal of being un-medicated.

If the birthing partner comes prepared, knowing what to expect of the birth, knowing who the support are, and all the details of the process will be very helpful.

***Key Tip for Fathers: Focus in on your wife, the number one goal is her comfort, her trying to rest and relax, and her enjoying the birthing process as much as possible.***

## The Advantages

One of the biggest advantages of a natural labor, is the mom and baby are more quickly united, bonding happens quickly. Results of this are better breastfeeding, better development of that bond between mom and baby in a normal, natural labor, as opposed to cesarean section.

A perfect birth is when the family gets what they want, and the baby is born healthy. However, in the very best and most well planned deliveries there can be problems. If those problems are caught early, they often can be averted with just some simple things, maybe even repositioning, or a little oxygen, without the need for major intervention.