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Labor Partner's Cheat Sheet

Birth companions play a special role during labor. Since there will be a lot going on that day, print this "cheat sheet" and bring it with you. Refer to it for ideas to try during the different stages of labor.



Techniques for Early Labor

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

- Rest with your partner to save your energy
- Draw a warm bath for her (check with your healthcare provider first if you think her bag of waters is broken)
- Prepare light snacks and bring her drinks of water or non-acidic juices (as discussed with your healthcare provider)
- Take a walk with her
- Time contractions and inform your healthcare provider of your progress
- Involve her in light activities, such as watching a movie, playing cards, or reading
- Inform necessary people that labor has started, especially if you need to cancel previous obligations or make pet or childcare arrangements

Techniques for Active Labor & Transition

Once contractions become more intense for your partner, help her use the comfort techniques that work best for her. Suggest something new if the technique you're using is starting to be ineffective or monotonous for her. Help your partner stick to her goals by being supportive and offering emotional assurance. You can:

- Help her change into different positions. Standing, walking, squatting, hands and knees, kneeling, slow dancing, sitting, and side-lying are all good options
- Help her use movement, such as walking, stair climbing, and pelvic rocking
- Interact with her face-to-face and give brief instructions if she loses focus (be sure to have fresh breath throughout labor!)
- Breathe with her through contractions and count out loud if she wants you to
- Guide her in visualization exercises that focus on the baby or special memories that you share
- Be supportive of the sounds she needs to make during labor. However, be aware that higher pitched cries could be a sign that she is feeling out of control and needs focus.
- Provide relief and comfort to cope with nausea, such as pressing her acupressure points, 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 birth ball
- Provide emotional encouragement ("You're doing great." "You're breathing really well." "Our baby will be here soon." "You're so strong." "Your body is doing its job wonderfully." "I love you so much.")

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Labor Partner's Cheat Sheet CONTINUED

Techniques for Back Labor

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

- Change positions – try squatting, hands and knees, 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
- Apply counter pressure

Techniques for Long Labor

Labor doesn't always follow a prescribed course. If labor is taking a long time:

- Change techniques and positions, including using the back labor techniques mentioned in the left column
- Offer to change the atmosphere in the room by dimming the lights or playing music, or leave the labor room together and go out in the hall or waiting area
- Rest (you need to rest, too, so consider having a backup support person)
- Help your partner stay hydrated and nourished as allowed by your healthcare provider. Don't forget to eat if you're hungry and drink water so you will have the energy to provide good labor support.

Techniques for Pushing

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

- 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)
- 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



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