



Alta Bates Summit  
Medical Center  
A Sutter Health Affiliate

## Comfort and Support Measures for Labor

*The following comfort and support measures have been found to be very helpful to women in early labor.*

### Support

Whenever possible the presence of a supportive partner, family member, or friend as a “coach” for you at home is very beneficial. Your partner/coach can help you through contractions by timing contractions, breathing along with you, and encouraging you to relax. It may be helpful for your partner/coach to use slow gentle massage for areas of your body that are tense. Encouragement from your partner is essential as you work through each contraction and progress through this gradual part of labor.

### Positions for Labor

Position changes in early labor are important. It is recommended that you change your position about every thirty minutes. Some of the most helpful and effective positions for early labor are:

- Walking
- Sitting
- Semi-reclining
- Squatting
- Kneeling
- Lying on your side
- Hands and knees on the floor or bed
- Leaning on your birth partner
- Sitting in a rocking chair
- Sitting on a labor ball
- Showering with warm water running on your abdomen

Back labor is usually caused by the position of the baby. If you are experiencing strong labor contractions in your back, you might find the following suggestions helpful:

- Back massage
- Hot cloths or compresses to the lower back
- Counter pressure against the lower back using your fist, heel of your hand, or a firm object (a tennis ball, rolling pin, cold can of juice or soda pop, or an ice pack)
- Leaning on your partner/couch
- Leaning on a chair back or table
- Getting into a hands and knees position on the bed or floor
- Showering with warm water running on your lower back

### Nourishment

- Keep drinking clear juices (apple, grape and cranberry) throughout your labor. A light snack is okay when your contractions are still infrequent (6-7 minutes, or further, apart).
- Do not eat a meal once you think you are in labor since labor slows down digestion. Continue to drink clear liquids.
- If you experience nausea, try ice chips and sips of liquid. If you experience ongoing vomiting, please call your care provider.

## Rest

- Rest as much as possible when you are not walking or working through a contraction. You do not need to lie in bed to rest, although you may want to do this occasionally.
- Sitting in a tub of water (if you are not leaking amniotic fluid) is very relaxing and helps with the pain of the contractions.
- Remember to rest between contractions, since a few minutes at a time can really help over the course of your labor.
- Keep the lights dim, listen to music you find soothing and let your answering machine take your calls.
- Some women find diversion very helpful during early labor. You might want to pack your bag for the hospital, prepare some baby things, or go for a walk.

*We look forward to seeing you soon.*

