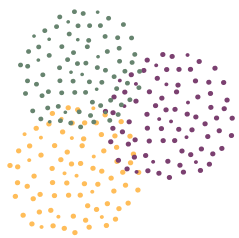


exploring your decisions & needs in labor



- exploring your values
- navigating labor
- emotional security
- physical security
- medicated pain coping options
- postpartum needs



Welcome!

This guide was compiled by the Ithaca Doula Collective to be a resource for labor and postpartum support during the Covid-19 global pandemic when physical doula support may be restricted due to distancing and quarantine. However, this information is applicable at all times. Additional resources can be found on our website and we welcome you to contact us directly for individualized doula support and more information.

www.IthacaDoulaCollective.com

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Exploring your values for your upcoming birth

As you prepare for your upcoming birth, let's start with trying to figure out what feels important to you. There are some basic questions that might help guide what is available to you at this time.

Consider the following questions:

- Are you experiencing a low or high-risk pregnancy?
- Are you having a hospital or homebirth?
- Do you feel comfortable with interventions, or do you wish to avoid interventions?
- Do you wish to use medical pain relief, or plan for an un-medicated delivery, or are you unsure?

Exploring scenarios where intervention is more common

Before we go through pain coping options, here are the common conditions where your provider might suggest increased interventions for your birth. At this time, COVID-19 does not mean that you need to change your birth plan or method of delivery. You should decide what is best for you and your baby on a case-by-case basis.

- PROM (Premature Rupture of Membranes)
- Group Beta Strep (GBS)
- Suspected Big Baby
- Pregnancy after the age of 40
- Late Babies (Postdates)
- Gestational Diabetes
- Breech/Transverse Baby
- Preeclampsia
- High Blood Pressure
- Multiples

There is varying degree of risk for each of the scenarios that are listed above. And often times when we talk about risk, we speak in relative terms, rather than actual numbers. The following resources are *excellent* to help you decide the best course of action for you and your baby.

- www.evidencebasedbirth.com
- www.about.birth.com
- <http://katedimpfl.com/online-classes>
- <https://www.lamaze.org/pregnancy-resource>

Exploring methods for coping with birth

Medicated Pain Coping

Do you want to use medication for pain coping?

"Medicated Rest" with IV medications

- IV medications are often used in early labor or during a prodromal labor. The pain relief they provide is the same as the bath, but they make you very sleepy to help spread out or sleep in between contractions. This tool is often not recommended in active labor.

Epidural or Intrathecal

- Epidural or Intrathecal are considered the gold standard for medicated pain relief. The epidural is best used in active labor, as to not slow down your contractions. This limits the laboring person's movements, so ask the nurses for a peanut ball to help your baby rotate through your pelvis while you're resting.

Consider the following:

1. If your plan is to avoid pain medication, what do you need for support to stick to your goal? What if you change your mind?
2. When would you want pain medication? What will have to change about your plan if you use this tool? (For example, if you have an epidural, you no longer can move about the room).

Your pain coping toolbox

You have everyday tools that you use for coping with pain and stress. Some of those tools are healthier than others. Try now to make a list of things that you already do when you feel physical discomfort, or emotional vulnerability. Birth is both physical and emotional—so try to recall both types of situations.

Some examples might be: meditation, movement, listening to music, hugs, laying under the covers, change of environment, crying, yelling, getting a massage and more—the list is endless!

In labor, it is very important for the birth giver to have privacy, a sense of safety, and presence to allow “your mammal” to be comfortable enough to shift deeper into labor.

Talk together about each stage of labor and create a coping toolbox to best meet your physical and emotional needs for each stage of labor. Include techniques, props, and words you want to hear. If possible, we encourage both partners to answer the following questions/sections...

Finding your emotional security:

- What do you need to feel safe?
- How do you know that you are loved?
- How does your partner know you love him/her?
- In what ways do you and your partner express playfulness or joy?
- In what ways do you like your partner to show that they are present?

Finding your physical security:

- What does your body need when you are feeling pain, tension or stress?
- Do you focus on pain? Away from the pain? How?
- Do you need people around? Or do you need more privacy?

Early Labor Activities/Coping:

- What do you need for early labor? What do you need to prepare beforehand for this to happen?

(Early labor is about distraction until labor really requires your attention)

Active Labor Coping:

- What do you need for active labor? What do you need to prepare beforehand for this to happen?

(In active labor, birthing individuals need more emotional and physical support)

Transition and Pushing:

- Consider positions for pushing as you think about your needs. If you want to squat, lay on your side, use a birth ball, etc., what will you need?

(The shortest but often the most arduous stage of labor. Laboring persons need the most support here.)

Length of labor

Consider these questions about the length of labor and take a minute to think about what you would do if you have a shorter or longer labor than you “expected”. (Keep in mind the average first labor is 24-48 hours)

- What will you do if you have a short labor/long labor?
- What support will you need in a short labor/long labor?
- If you notice your labor is progressing quickly/progressing slowly, what will you do differently?
- What are your plans to try if your labor stalls? *(Can you move your body to help baby find a better position in your pelvis? Do you have something you need to say? Do you need more privacy? Keep in mind, the body creates pauses for rest- maybe the best solution is sleep)*

Births that take a detour

It is impossible to plan for birth. Planning for birth is a process of becoming comfortable with the range of possibilities and choices available. Birth is following the baby and where the baby leads you in the birth. A detour also doesn't mean automatic disappointment or dysfunction in the birth process- the birth can take you places that may delight and surprise you! Below, we encourage you to explore the feelings you might have if your plan takes a detour.

- What if your birth does not go as planned?
- What will you need to allow you to stay present in your birth?
- What do you need to be available in the event of your birth has an unexpected outcome?

Postpartum needs

Having your baby is just one step in the transition into parenthood. Newborn care and the early days of new parenthood can come with their own unique needs. Consider the following questions to help you with that transition:

- What is your postpartum plan? Are there creative ways to have support during time of social-distancing and quarantine (e.g. virtual support, FB groups, food delivery.)
- How will you try to get as much rest as possible?
- What creature comforts do you need to feel like yourself? (E.g., a shower every day, a walk outside, reading time, time to do yoga, etc.) How can you help make it happen?
- How will you feed your baby? What sort of support do you need for that?
- What do you worry about in the postpartum transition? We encourage to you discuss it and plan out how to respond to inevitable shifts in your relationships.
- What will you do to ensure that you have time together as a couple?