



Coping with Early Labour techniques

Early, or prodromal, labour can be defined by contractions that do not increase in strength and duration. Unless the contractions are becoming longer, stronger and closer together, this pattern of contractions is called prodromal or early labour.

Early labour may be hard to identify, as contractions may be 5 minutes apart and even may be experienced as painful. Some women experience lower back pain, pain running down either or both legs or colicky cramping in the front or cervical area. All of these experiences of early labour is normal. Women having their first baby may experience a longer early phase of labour, however, any woman may experience this pattern of labour and can use these strategies to cope.

- **Ignore, ignore, ignore.** This is the most critical aspect of coping with early labour. Until your contractions absolutely **MUST** have your attention, it is critical for you to carry on with your daily routine. This includes sleeping at night and napping during the day.
- **Sleep or rest.** Women who do not sleep while in early labour are at the most risk of needing intervention and pain relief. This is not because the woman cannot handle the pain, but because an exhausted woman cannot relax enough to allow her cervix to open (dilate). Nap in the day and sleep at night. Also, a hot cup of chamomile tea may help you to sleep. If you cannot sleep, lying down to preserve your energy. Rest is nearly as good as sleep and is **WAY** better than being up all night
- **Eat and drink.** It is critical for any woman to continue to eat and drink, especially in the early phases of labour. Sipping water, juice and tea (red raspberry or nettle) throughout early labour will ensure an adequate supply of energy for the body to progress into active labour. The same principle holds true for eating. Low-release, carbohydrate-rich foods are best. These include bread, potatoes and pasta. If you're not feeling hungry try a smoothie, yogurt, fruit anything you desire.
- **Bath (or Shower).** Many women find a water helps them relax as they ease the pain of contractions. Baths are more common as they may encourage sleep. You can also try to sleep in the bath, if that is where you feel most relaxed. If contractions slowdown in the bath, that is another sign that it is still early labour. Take advantage and rest.
- **Gravol and Tylenol.** If the cramps are disrupting sleep it is safe to take regular strength Tylenol and Gravol as this will aid with rest and relaxation before your active labour starts.

- **Alcohol.** If you are not opposed, alcohol can also assist you to relax while in early labour. 2 tsp. of Jagermeister is the preferred choice; however, a small glass of wine or a beer may also produce similar effects. *Please note this is no way of endorsing alcohol in pregnancy, labour & birth or postpartum.*
- **Other strategies for ignoring your labour.** There are many things you can do to focus on something else beside your contractions. The list is not exhaustive.
 - DRINK, EAT, REST
 - If you are well rested, try going for a walk
 - Pray, meditate, journal
 - Watch a movie
 - Make a birthday cake for the baby or Make muffins, cookies or brownies.
 - Knitting, crochet, or beading.
 - Use of hot water bottle or a heated wheat /bean bag heated on your lower back or tummy.
 - Use of TENS Machine when they are getting stronger, but still manageable.
- **Homeopathics.** EZ Birth or homeopathic caulophyllum can be used for early labour / and active labour. While you are in early labour, take 3 pellets of EZ birth (or caulophyllum) every 10 minutes for 3 doses. Wait 30 minutes and repeat. This will either assist your body to kick into labour or should help the contractions settle down so that you may rest.
- **Natural Oxytocin.** Female orgasm, nipple stimulation, sex, these activities promote the release of oxytocin, the hormone that causes the uterus to contract. Experiment and find out what works for you. Remember, NOTHING in the vagina if your membranes have ruptured (water has broken).
- **Essential Oil.** Various Essential oils such as Lavender can help slow or stop labour in order for you to get your needed rest. Other essential oils can get contractions stronger. Please page us so we can review what is right for your situation.
- **Herbs.** Just like the essential oils, your midwives carry herbs to assist you while you are in early labour. If you are not coping well with prodromal labour, you can page us so we can review what is right for your situation.

Eventually these distractions won't work anymore, and you will know you are in good labour. The rhythm of labour will encourage a trance-like state that will require you to go deep inside yourself. You will need to concentrate on relaxing your body and mind during and after the contractions. Begin to time the contractions while you focus on breath, visualization, massage, and words of encouragement from your labour support.