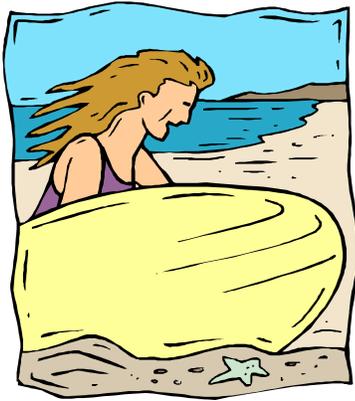


Surfing Through Labor

Getting through labor is a lot like surfing. Between the waves, the surfers are waiting and watching, focused on the wave that's coming. As each wave approaches, they mentally and physically prepare to ride the wave. If they get distracted and are not paying attention, the next wave will crash over them, pushing them under the water, and all they can do is try to survive that wave.

When a woman in labor becomes distracted, the contraction can be like the wave, crashing over them and causing intense pain. This is the point at which many women feel they can't handle the pain any longer, and ask for an epidural -- but it's just a temporary setback.

Contractions also come in waves and if you're prepared for the waves, they won't overcome you. If you lose control of a wave, don't worry -- you can get through it as best you can and you'll be even more prepared for the next one. Stay focused and relaxed, and you can be in control and ride the waves, one wave at a time.



During labor you will know the next contraction is starting before the monitor can register the contraction (if you are being monitored) and, hopefully, you will be off the monitor more than you are on it. Your birth support team can help you ride the waves, but we need to know the contraction is coming as soon as you know it. Most women will find a way to signal the onset of a contraction to their team, but since you should be taking a welcoming breath at the beginning of each contraction anyway, that is the perfect signal.

As your labor progresses, you will become more inner focused. You won't want to take the time or breath to verbally let your team know when your contraction is beginning. So, at the beginning of each contraction, take a deep welcoming breath, in through your nose and out through your mouth, to notify your team and oxygenate your baby. When the contraction ends, take another deep cleansing breath to signal its passing and to start your relaxation time.



Your doula is like the life guard, quietly observing, making suggestions only when necessary. She will watch over you, helping to keep you safe, but she knows that you are strong and capable. She is trained to recognize trouble spots and is ready to help you if you need help, or just to watch and support you as you access your inner strength.

If you can stay relaxed and focused, your team can help you get through your labor with the least amount of pain and intervention.

HAPPY SURFING!



Birth Preference Tips

Your birth preferences (also called a birth plan) must be read to be effective. To increase your chances of having the care you want from the hospital staff:

- ▶ **Keep it brief** - list only what's most important to you -- choose your battles. Remember, you can refuse any intervention when it is offered -- just ask for a waiver.
- ▶ **Make it easy to read** - avoid using a small font or handwriting unless your handwriting is clear and easy to read. Use bullet points and leave some white space. Print on colored paper to distinguish it from the white papers in your file.
- ▶ **Make it relevant** - if your hospital doesn't give enemas, don't tell them you don't want one. The nurses don't need to know that you want to labor at home for as long as possible.
- ▶ **Personalize it** - attach a snapshot of you and your partner to the birth plan to identify who provided the food basket (see below). If you've had other births, you might mention that experience, i.e., "My first child was born by cesarean delivery, so it's important to me to avoid interventions for this birth."
- ▶ **Say it with food** - nurses work long hours and sometimes miss their lunch break, so they always appreciate snacks. Your birth preferences, with its photo attached, will be read by every nurse at the station when presented with a small basket or gift bag of reasonably healthy snacks, such as cookies, fruit, crackers and cheese, nuts, etc. Chocolate can be included but there should be some nourishing food along with it. Fruit is also always welcome. Bring an additional basket or bag for the postpartum nurses, too!
- ▶ **Solicit their help** - most doctors and nurses go into the health profession because they want to help. However, because they are in the medical profession, many of them have never seen a natural (unmedicated) birth, and they truly believe that the epidural, episiotomy, I.V., heplock, catheter, internal fetal monitor, etc. are all "helpful." Asking for their help in avoiding such interventions, gives them a different prospective.
- ▶ **Keep it positive** - try to avoid the words and phrases that include "no," or "don't." Find the positive side of what you want and say it that way. Saying "It's important to me to have the freedom to walk and change positions during my labor" will be respected more than "I don't want to have continuous fetal monitoring."
- ▶ **Keep it simple** - "I am hoping to work with a nurse who believes in natural childbirth" and "I expect to actively participate in all decisions to ensure my ability to provide informed consent" are the types of simple statements that will get you what you want.