

When Things Feel “Stuck”

What do you do if it feels like things aren't progressing? It's at this point that families often feel pressured to accept interventions that they don't really want or need. Here are some tips to get things moving:

Get Moving!

Changing positions creates change in the pelvis – remember your pelvis is very flexible at the end of pregnancy. It only takes a little change to create a lot of room for baby. Being upright and moving helps you open:

- Walk
- Climb up & down stairs (this is especially effective)
- Rock on a birth ball – rotating your hips in circular motion helps baby move down
- Rock on hands & knees
- Squat with help (squat if baby is anterior – wait to squat if baby is posterior)
- Stand & lean on a birth partner: swaying/shuffling or dancing helps a lot
- Stand & lean on a low counter or windowsill. Circle your hips if you can

Get Calories!

It's silly to expect women to give birth without any energy! Birth is an athletic event, and athletes need nutrition and calories. The uterus is a muscle and “quick energy” can help it do its job.

Something sweet, with simple sugars, can be used by the body and uterus quickly. As suggested above, go for things like honey, maple syrup, sports drinks, or even a clear soda. All have simple sugars the body can use almost immediately. Oatmeal is another midwife favorite.

If mama is hungry, mama should eat.

Get Rest!

Sometimes labors are long, and that's okay. Research shows it's normal, and that many cesareans could be prevented if people were just patient! But mamas having a long labor need to rest – and sometimes mamas just need to rest during a short labor!!

Side-lying positions can let you rest (and often help baby adjust position while you relax). Birth tubs, or even leaning/squatting in the shower can also be restful. And many mamas find that sitting on a birth ball and leaning against the bed is a comfortable place to rest between birthing waves.

Dark and quiet can help you rest and make a natural environment for birthing!

Get Baby Lined Up!

Being upright and moving will help with lining baby up. It's very possible to create room and get baby lined up *during your birthing time*. Baby is an active part of birth!

- Standing, climbing stairs, and squatting can all help open the pelvis
- Using rebozo or another strip of cloth to lift the belly can help baby shift to another position
- Try "Knee to Chest" for a bit (see the Positions section)
- Sit on the toilet for a bit

When It's Hard to Handle

Everything in the playbook so far can help with your birthing time when it feels intense or overwhelming.

Changing positions, going to the bathroom, getting some quick energy/calories often really helps if mama is having trouble! Try those!

Breathing is also **very** helpful to get through a tough contraction. Using a controlled, deep breath – not so deep as to be unnatural. **Birth Partner – you should breathe and let mama copy you.**

After the tough contraction is the time to take a calming breath or two, then shift positions, move to another place (like the shower, tub, or toilet), have a drink, look at a reminder of baby, etc.

More Ideas

- Make sure the room is warm and dark.
- Focus on softening and relaxing your pelvic muscles – this helps you open.
- Play music that you love, that helps you move deeper into labor, or that soothes you.
- Stand and bear down on low support, or pull on a soft rope support if it helps.
- Vocalize -use deep, open moans. Relax your jaw. This relaxes your bottom.
- Visualize your body opening and your baby moving down.
- Keep peeing. This gets you moving and some women like laboring on the toilet.
- Try aromatherapy. Massage with essential oils in a carrier oil can be helpful.

- Have an attendant use counter-pressure for strong back labor, but stay active in helping your baby turn.
- Use a hot sock, rice sock, or aromatherapy stuffed animal to apply moist heat.
- Use cool washcloths or a frozen hot sock, rice sock, or aromatherapy animal for cold.
- Get in the shower.
- Get into a tub of warm water.
- Have an attendant give you a massage on your legs, or anywhere that feels good.
- Don't try to escape the pain – embrace it, go with it. Explore it, be curious about it, if it helps.
- Feel the love of those around you.
- Talk to your baby.
- Look in the eyes of your support team.
- Do what your body tells you to do.
- Breathe.
- Trust yourself.