

The Ultimate Natural Birth Playbook



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Things to Remember

It's time for your baby's birthday! Today is an amazing day ☺ *The Ultimate Natural Birth Playbook* covers some important things to remember when having a natural birth. Here are some important things to remember as your birthing time starts and throughout the time that you're working with baby.

What is Your Role?

If you're a birthing woman, your role may seem obvious. But remember, you have a clear job: to work with your baby and help him or her be born!

Dads and birth partners: Remember, you're there to support mama and help her work with baby. You don't have to "fix" anything or take away the effort of birthing. Your support and presence are very helpful. This playbook helps you help her – you use it. Let her stay in her "birthing brain" ☺

Baby: You can't read yet, but you're working hard right along with your Mama. It won't be long before you're looking at each other in awe! Mama, remember, **you're doing this amazing work with your baby!**

When to Go to the Hospital

A basic question is often "when should I go to the hospital," or, if planning a home birth "when should I have my midwife come?"

A good rule of thumb is: *when contractions are **5 minutes apart and lasting 60 seconds, and have been for about an hour.***

Research shows that first-time mamas should wait until you're really having to work as you breathe through your contractions. It's good to **stay at home as long as possible.**

Keeping Things Moving

Here are tips to keep your birthing time moving smoothly:

- Walk, climb up & down stairs, rock on a birth ball, lean on your birth partner and sway, etc.
- Keep upright & mobile
- Drink regular sips of water – and go to the bathroom regularly
- Use your birth skills to work with baby

Keeping Up Energy

Energy is vitally important to keep things moving for many mamas. Energy comes from rest and nutrition (aka, food!). Make sure you're getting what you need:

- Drink regular sips of water (and, again, go to the bathroom regularly)
- Eat throughout a longer birthing time. Research shows that *real food/drink* is more effective than an IV.
- “Quick” energy can be helpful if mama is really tired, or during the pushing stage/postpartum if the uterus seems tired:
 - Spoonful of honey or maple syrup
 - Sports drink or even a soft drink like Mountain Dew!
- *Rest* when you need to.

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.

Preventing Complications

Again, everything above is going to help with this – a lot!

Stay home as long as possible if you're planning to go to the hospital or birthing center.

Decline vaginal exams.

Request *intermittent* fetal monitoring.

Stay active, mobile, and upright to prevent “stalls” and “failure to progress.”

Calories (food and drink!) help mama, baby, and uterus have energy to work with during birthing.

Pee regularly, so the bladder stays empty and out of the way.

A **dark, quiet environment** keeps hormone levels naturally high, which is incredibly important for birthing women. Naturally high levels of oxytocin, beta endorphin, and other birthing hormones keep labor working effectively and prevent complications such as extra bleeding.

Be patient if things are “slow” – REST, get calories, and wait.

Research shows that just waiting a couple of hours drastically reduces the number of unnecessary cesareans – and if mama and baby are both doing well, waiting longer is safe.

Ask “are mom and baby stable?” and “what if we wait?” if interventions are being pushed. If mama and baby are stable, and mama can *rest and get calories* (and get upright, take a walk, dance, etc. once rested), it's safe to wait **and birthing will usually progress just fine.**

Let your body do the pushing. This is also called physiologic pushing. This lets the uterus and hormones do their work, keeps oxygen levels high, and it minimizes the chances of tearing.

Skin-to-Skin with baby after he or she is born. **Leave off baby's hat,** too. This skin-to-skin contact lets you nuzzle your nose into baby's head. The feel and smell of your baby activate incredible surges of oxytocin, which

helps your body wrap up the birth process quickly. It also helps baby start to settle in and prepare to nurse (it's normal for baby to cuddle & check you out for up to an hour *before* nursing – just his or her presence creates hormonal safety for you).

Laboraide Recipes

Here are a few recipes for **homemade Laborade**:

- 2 Cups Water
- 2 Cups Apple Juice
- Salt to taste
- Honey to taste
- 2 crushed Calcium Tablets
- 1-2 Fresh Squeezed Lemons

Mix together and drink!

- 1 quart of Water
- 1/2 tsp Salt
- 1/3 Cup Honey
- 1/3 Cup Lemon Juice
- 1-2 Calcium Tablets, crushed
- 1/4 teaspoon Baking Soda

Again, mix together and drink!

- 1 qt Pure Water
- 1 tsp Sea Salt
- 1 Tbsp Blackstrap Molasses
- 1 Tbsp fresh Lemon Juice (or Apple Cider Vinegar)
- 2 Tbsp Raw Honey

Mix and enjoy for the minerals and energy!



You may also want to have some **herbal teas** on hand; Red Raspberry, a Nettles infusion, Chamomile, or Peppermint are good ideas. You can sweeten these with honey or molasses.

All these recipes and the teas can be **frozen** into ice cube trays or popsicle molds if you desire. Some women prefer fresh to frozen. Others like the cool of the ice cubes/popsicles.