

[A Poem for my Grandma](#)

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Blessed Be My Grandmother

At 95 years of age, she now lays her tired hardworking body on the bed. Her six living children have just visited her to comfort her aging body. I called my mother and asked how grandma was doing since I'm more than 12,000 miles away from home. She said that she sometimes shows moments of strength whenever she is cared for by her family. Her family has grown to more than 36 grandchildren and 20 great grandchildren.

Blessed be my grandmother for she has endured the test of time. Many years ago she would blow air on my head and utter prayers and blessings before I had to go to another island. I remember now why I value the old and hand made things in life.

I can still see her sewing a quilt by hand from remnants of clothes she had asked for from the neighbor's shop. She would smile and proudly present to me her only hand-made quilt blanket and tell me that she will make pillow cases for my family. We did use her pillows and pillow cases for a long time.

Blessed be my grandmother who takes care of the old and used and made them into valuable items. She would sleep with me and give me a massage whenever I had a fever. That may be the reason why I don't have to take medications when I have a fever now. She wets me with warm compresses all over my body and massaged me with coconut oil. For different kinds of ailments she would use boiled herbs, chewed plants, incense, chants and prayers. For hours she would stir coconut juice into oil in a hot burning wooden stove.

Her strongest potion was her loving hands that would knead and roll my body and heal me like no other. Like a salesperson for many afternoons she would bring breads and snacks to the farmers in the fields. Blessed be my grandmother who heals and makes every time an important value never to be lost.

Her laboring hands and feet are strong, short and old. She was an apprentice midwife whenever any one of her daughters and daughters-in-law were having a baby. With her strong and commanding voice, she would coach them to bear down and push their babies. She was there to wash them and their babies after birth. Her healing hands provided infant massage and postpartum bliss for a new mother. She was their teacher in the first few years of mothering. Blessed be my grandmother who values herself as a woman and mother.

She would tell us stories of her adventures during World War II. Every day her family had to move to another hiding place away from the Japanese. She would be carrying two pots full of cooked yams or rice and chicken adobo. She would also feed the evacuating friends and family from the city. She made sure that she comforted her children every minute of the day. It took 40 years before her younger son left her to marry. But even then, her younger son would always see her everyday and give her bread and snacks. Blessed be my grandmother for her caring ways.

Every time there was someone who needed to be prayed for, she is summoned. She prayed and chanted in Latin and Visayan. She led the prayer meetings. She taught us her grandchildren how to respond and pray with her while we giggled at the foreign words. She never spanked us her grandchildren but her voice propels us to follow her just like our mothers. Maybe she was the other mother who mothered us when our mothers were busy. She was there when we are young and helpless. Blessed be my grandmother who taught us how to kneel and pray and sing vespers.

When everyone in the family is afraid she shows her strength and courage. When friends are mourning she prays with them and when one is sick she lays hand on her/him. When one is in crisis like quarreling husband and wife, she is the mediator. She made sure that we respect the old people. She made sure that we have said our prayers. Blessed be my grandmother Claudia Defensor Poral for she taught me how to cry, be strong, be a woman and now be a mother.

ABCs

You may call this section - the A to Z topics and thoughts for pregnant mothers. If you think of other topics that you want included, please let me know (connie@motherhealth.com). Some of the sources here are from my own personal experience as a homebirth mother and childbirth educator.

Acidophilus

Acidophilus may aid digestion and absorption of food nutrients and produce B-complex vitamins and vitamin K. It inhibits growth of other organisms by competing for nutrients, altering the pH environment, or producing bacteriocins, such as hydrogen peroxide, lactic acid, or acetic acid. Available in various dosages, in cultures ranging from 500 million to 4 billion viable organisms of *L. acidophilus*, in capsules, granules, powders, softgels, suppositories, tablets, milk and yogurts.

Acidophilus may be useful as an aid in the treatment and prevention of bacterial vaginosis and vaginal yeast infections due to *Candida Albicans*. It may exert antibacterial activity against *Helicobacter pylori* or other intestinal bacteria. Human studies have demonstrated that the ingestion of *L. acidophilus* reduces the concentration of certain fecal enzymes that promote the formation of carcinogens in the colon.

Eat a healthy amount of yogurt when pregnant. Babies over 9 months old can also benefit from eating yogurt. Mothers with group B strep and other related infections do well with the capsule form plus vitamin C and Echinacea herb. A cup of yogurt a day drives the unwanted organisms away. Some mothers who took Acidophilus (in capsule form), vitamin C with bioflavonoids (regular dose) and echinacea (an immune booster herb) in tincture form have reduced their Group B Strep infection to what their body can fight, strengthened the amniotic sac and other beneficial results.

Ayurveda

Some mothers (especially from India) who practices the principles of Ayurveda balance their food with the body's physiology and personality.

Anesthesia (Epidural)

In animals epidural anesthesia has interfered with maternal attachment and the onset of mothering behavior by blocking the sensory stimuli for the central release of oxytocin.

Anxiety

High-anxiety states affect the laboring mother. It can affect oxygenation and the flow of nutrients to the fetus and it has been correlated with abnormal decreases in fetal movement. It has also been associated with uterine dysfunction in labor and other debilitating labor patterns. Anxiety

can be transformed by a mother with a strong will, focus and concentration, knowledge of what is happening and faith in herself. The flow of oxytocin during labor can be sustained and the ejective reflex remain largely unimpeded.

Blue Cohosh

Blue cohosh is an agent to induce labor. It contains glycoside which stimulates smooth muscle in the uterus. It is not to be used in clients with heart disease.

Breech presentation

The baby's buttocks or legs, and not his head, are positioned against the cervix during labor.

Birth control

Birth control using the combination of mucus method, rhythm, and abstinence can be beneficial to most mothers. When the menstruation comes at day one, start counting and on day 10 till day 17 abstain from sex. Check the mucus between day 10 till day 16. The stretchy egg-white mucus is indicative of the ovulation period. Use condoms, diaphragm or abstinence during the fertile days.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is likened to the child's connection with the umbilical cord when inside the womb. Keys in succeeding in breastfeeding include an unmedicated birth, early sucking, and making sure that the baby sucks the breast comfortably.

Some mothers are fortunate to get support from those who have experienced breastfeeding their babies. Seeking help from other moms, reading books on breastfeeding, joining support groups and using mothering instincts can all help. But without a full commitment to breastfeed her baby, a mother might be tempted not to breastfeed.

Knowing that breastmilk contains sleep inducing chemicals and that breastmilk is best nutrition for the baby might change the minds of some mothers. Challenges such as breast engorgement and sore nipples can be prevented when baby is fed on demand and comfortably. Mom should be as well rested as possible and eating healthy foods. The ease and convenience that breastfeeding affords the baby and moms are some of the surprising rewards.

Bottle-feeding

Consuming alternate food sources or using pumped breastmilk stored properly can help working mothers (see pumping breastmilk before returning to work).

Caesarean Operations

Caesarean operation is the delivery of the fetus through the abdominal and uterine walls after the twenty-eight week of pregnancy. In about 1% of the total number of deliveries these operations are medically necessary. It is increasingly being performed under epidural rather than general anesthetic. This removes the risks associated with general anaesthetic and enables the mother to see and hold her baby at birth. Of the caesarean operations discussed in the published Report on Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths in England and Wales 1979-1981 (DHSS, 1986), 70% were performed for hypertensive disease of pregnancy, fetal distress, or failure or delay of progress in labor.

Midwives and doulas show mothers how to cope during labor and how to summon their mothering wisdom and power. Many Caesarean operations can be prevented when mother is with a midwife and or a doula. Calm, healthy and full term babies are those born vaginally and breastfed a few minutes after birth. Some mothers feel that breastfeeding is affected by Caesarean operations. In unmedicated and natural birth, recovery is much faster for the mom and baby is not depressed.

One mother who had been drinking gallons of milk heavily during her first pregnancy had a Caesarean operation. For her second pregnancy, she was under the care of a midwife. She did not drink gallons of milk and she had a home birth for her second baby. Another mother that I personally helped during her labor had a Caesarean operation due to arrest in dilatation according to her doctors. She was starved for 20 hours and laying on her back she asked for more epidurals, one after another. Sometimes breastfeeding can't happen right away because of mom's exhaustion and pain after surgery.

Colic

The term "colic" describes a frequent symptom complex of paroxysmal abdominal pain, presumably of intestinal origin, and of severe crying. It occurs usually in infants younger than three months of age. Massage and seeing a chiropractor can help the infant.

Contraception

There are many natural ways of preventing conception: diaphragm or contraceptive cap, condom, abstinence, Rhythm method and the Mucus Billing Method. The Mucus Billing Method uses the presence of the stretchy and sticky mucus to signal fertility periods which occurs at the 14th day from the start of menstruation. Coupled with checking body temperature which would rise by about one degree when taken early in the morning and noting the first day of menstruation in a calendar and counting day 10 to day 17 as the fertile week, this natural method has proven successful in most women. Abstinence and or the use of condom or diaphragm should be used during the fertile days.

Diapers

Washing cloth diapers during the first year helps save money, makes a cleaner earth and keeps your baby's skin away from whatever toxins there may be in the disposable diapers.

Dystocia

Failure to progress has been a major cause of the rise in cesareans in the United States. After 45 hours of labor, the doctor advises the mother of the need for a cesarean operation. Dystocia is caused by a combination of the following factors: weak contractions, a greater-than-average size baby or a relatively small bony pelvis. Upright position and getting doulas and midwives can help prevent unnecessary c-sections.

Eating foods rich in iron and Vitamin C (with bioflavonoids strengthens the amniotic bag and prevents infection) and Vitamin K (rich in alfalfa sprouts) which helps prevent blood clotting. Cooking in cast iron pots or pans, and using other herbal remedies such as yellow dock root can help prevent anemia. As the last resort when supplementation is necessary, taking chelated iron supplements can also help.

Echinacea drops can help strengthen the immune system and fight other minor infections. One drop for every half a pound of body weight per dose. Extract of echinacea stimulates phagocytosis and increases respiratory cellular activity and mobility of leukocytes. In vitro studies using the fresh-pressed juice of the aerial portion of echinacea and the aqueous extract of the roots inhibited influenza, herpes infections, and vesicular stomatitis virus. In vitro studies indicate that the polyphenols from echinacea protect collagen against free radical attack.

Emergency Childbirth.

Epidural Analgesia

Epidural analgesia is the introduction of a local anesthetic into the epidural space. Continuous epidural analgesia gives 80-90% of mothers complete pain relief in labor. Approximately 3% of the epidurals are completely ineffective. Some of the possible complications of epidural include: maternal hypotension, puncture of the dura mater causing leakage of the cerebrospinal fluid, toxic reaction to local anaesthetic, retention of urine, infection, fetal bradycardia/slow heartbeat (fetal distress), respiratory arrest, and sense of deprivation.

Epidural or analgesia of any form during labor can be unnecessary if the mom has a midwife and doula and she listens to her body. She must ready her body for the work that labor entails. She should use various means of relieving pain: upright position, counterpressure, listening to the pushing urges of the body, hot compresses, warm shower. She must prepare her energetic and well nourished body through proper nutrition and exercises. The foremost factor about the impending pain during labor is awareness that the body is designed to labor naturally and that fear prolongs labor

and makes it more painful.

Episiotomy

An episiotomy is an incision through the perineum and perineal body. The perineal body is a pyramid of muscle and fibrous tissue situated between the vagina and the rectum. A mother who trusts in her body, listens to it and has a healthy lifestyle with good nutrition and labors at home before going to the hospital can be spared the episiotomy, a cut that takes longer to heal and hurts more than having a baby.

Father

When you and your partner work together from the moment of conception till the baby is growing and needing both your time, your mothering is easy and your marriage grows stronger. The father will also feel that joyful sacrifice that you feel. He will then understand why you behave in such ways and how to be there at the right time for you and your baby. Fathers are also like expectant mothers, anxious of their new role as fathers. They are now serious in making more money for the new addition to the family. They view themselves as provider and giver of financial and emotional stability.

As everyone thinks of the mother's needs, the father is left on his own emotional needs. He senses the need to share in owning the birth of the baby and to take part in the unfolding of this new life.

He needs the reassurance that everything will work well. We should accept the many roles of our partner as provider, birth assistant, massage therapist and health care giver at home.

Go get a hot compress, call my labor support, midwife or doctor and shut your mouth, hubby. Listen to a laboring woman, don't disturb or talk to her when she is feeling the discomfort from the stretching of her bottom brought about by the descending baby. A hot compress (wet cloth) when applied to the opening yoni provides relief during labor.

Help me

Ask your friends to bring a meal for you after the baby is born. Many will be happy to accommodate your need for meals for the first few days. Help me do some household chores, hubby.

Honey

Honey can cause infant botulism, a serious disease for babies. It affects the babies nerves and muscles causing acute, flaccid paralytic illness caused by a neurotoxin. A baby who has this disease may be weak, constipated and eat poorly. Honey is safe for babbies over one year old. Foodborne botulism is best prevented by adhering to safe methods of home canning (pressure cooker and acidification), by avoiding suspicious foods, and by heating all home-canned foods for 80°C for at least 5 min.

Breastfeeding appears to slow the onset of infant botulism and to diminish the risk of respiratory arrest in infants in whom the disease develop. Feed only breastmilk for the first nine months.

I love you

Say I love you baby as soon as the baby is born.

Just push the baby out

Push when your body tells you to push.

Kind words

Let's spread these kind words of comfort for all laboring mothers: your laboring well for your baby, your body is doing what it supposed to do during birth and you are a woman, capable of birthing life and full of body wisdom.

Labor

Labor is real work for most first time moms. Fear prolongs labor. Standing in the shower, semi-squatting or sitting in the toilet, side lying, shaking the belly (belly dancing) and singing hastens the birth with less discomforts.

Life should be celebrated, call a Midwife (California Association of Midwives - 800-829-5791; American College of Nurse Midwives - 202-289-0171; Midwives Alliance of North America - 615-764-5561).

Midwives

Midwives are keepers of the normal birth. My midwife kept my pregnancy normal with low risks. The personal touch of care and service from my midwife from the prenatal visits to the postpartum care made my mothering role rewarding and fulfilling.

Mother

Easing the baby's transition from the womb to the outside world is the most important task of the mother. The mother who is conscious of the need of the child who is used to the life inside her womb bonds well with the baby. She knows and feels the baby's needs to breastfeed, sleep and be cared for by her loving hands and presence. A happy mom breeds a happy baby. A healthy diet makes a healthy mother and baby.

The smile of the baby is the sign of a contented baby and the sign of a nurturing mother. A healthy baby who seldom cries is a result of the non-stop care of the mother who feeds, cleans, and provide the comforts of her baby. The presence of the mother comforts the baby and the presence of the father or other family members are an extra bonus. That extra leap of growth from the bonding with the parents makes baby feel loved and secure.

Newborns

Newborns, nurture them for they will only be infants for a short time.

Open your body

Open up and embrace your baby at every contraction.

Place of Birth

The mother should be present in the birth process. She listens to the sensations of her body. She should feel comfortable and relaxed. Her determination to ease the baby's transition from the womb to the outside world would mean more energy to birth the baby. Her goal during birthing is for less trauma for the baby when inside and outside the womb.

She should choose the people and place that give the most comfort to her. Some mothers deliver their babies in the comfort of their home while others deliver their babies with little or no medication in the hospital. They know that the child within should be born as naturally as possible. Once the child is born, external forces in its surroundings have an impact on the success of its growth and health. The calmer the birth and delivery, the calmer the baby. The longer the baby stays in a healthy womb, the healthier the baby when born.

Quiet please

Laboring mother inside, quiet please.

Return control to the mother

Listen to the mothers before us, they have labored and endured it all without drugs.

Sleep

When putting the baby to sleep, the natural way to mother is:

To use the healing power of touch or massage.

To make skin to skin contact and to let the baby feels your heartbeat.

To make sure that the baby is clothed and positioned comfortably.

Sleeping with the baby during the early months of life outside the womb attunes mom to the baby's needs. Newborns need to be fed and changed constantly. They sleep well when the mom attends to baby's needs at every moment.

They feel the sense of security in the arms of their moms and listen to the soothing voice with admiration. A comforting bliss for both mom and baby follows. Some moms are surprised that they don't even have to rock or burp the baby who sleeps on her/his side after breastfeeding. Seeing the face of the mom before a nap helps many babies fall asleep and they go to sleep again when touched by the mother.

Taking

Heed the advice of mothers before us to endure the strain of caring for our babies. When exhaustion is forthcoming, mom should take a rest. Also it is a good idea to sleep when the baby sleeps.

Understand birth without fear

Why the fuss or fear? You are a woman and you are designed to birth a baby by listening to your body's wisdom. Get a midwife or a doula to comfort you during labor and birth.

Vow not to harm the newborn

To circumcise or not is not our business but the person who has the foreskin. Let's not count the numbers of sensory nerves attached to their skin that might be severed during the process of circumcision. If we do circumcise for religious reasons, it is a good idea to wait after a week when the clotting mechanism of the newborn is already intact. 13% of pediatricians surveyed did not know that the foreskin protects the glans, provides tissue for natural erection, defends against bacteria and viruses, lubricates and has fine touch receptivity and full range of sexual response. 22% did not know that the proper care of a young child's foreskin is simply wash the external genitalia.

Womb

A pregnant mother who talks to her baby, touches her belly with soothing massage and thinks of her baby while eating healthy foods, fares well during labor and delivery. Bonding starts from the womb while the mother is conscious of the growing life inside her. The mother understands that the baby experiences much of the same feeling she has.

Yeast infection

Some pregnant mothers who have a cheesy discharge from their yoni do well with washing their yonies with few drops of Tea Tree oil (has antibacterial and antifungal properties) or diluted water with vinegar or some dash of herbs like golden seal, sage and comfrey.

See Also:

Resources

References:

Behrman, Kliegman, Arvin. Nelson Textbook of Pediatrics, W.B Saunders Company, 1996

Fetrow C, Avila J. Professional's Handbook of Complimentary & Alternative Medicines. Springhouse, 1999.

Sears W, Sears M. The Baby Book, Little, Brown and Company, 1993

Circumcision Web Site References and Further Reading:

A list of pertinent websites can be found at:

<http://www.nocirc.org>

A.M.E. (Association contre la Mutilacion des Enfants):

<http://www.enfant.org>

email: ame@enfant.org

Billy R., Circumcision Exposed: Rethinking a Medical and Cultural Tradition, The Crossing Press, POB 1048 Freedom California 95018

In Memory of the Sexually Mutilated Child:

<http://www.sexuallymutilatedchild.org>

NORM (National Organization of Restoring Men):

<http://www.norm.org>

Anemia

When to supplement with iron

Anemia is defined as a hematocrit <30, and Hemoglobin <10g. These indicators reflect the oxygenation of the tissues of the mother and therefore the babies. This varies with practitioners, however. Before the hemoglobin (Hgb) in the blood dips down to 10.5 grams and hematocrit value of less than 32% (Hct), pregnant moms should take iron supplements (40 mg chelated capsule form, 3x a day) in order not to be risked out from natural unmedicated birth in the hospital or homebirth. If a homebirth mom is not eating at least five servings of colorful fruits and vegetables a day, prenatal multivitamin and mineral supplement are recommended. Moms who have heavy menstrual periods, have been taking pills before conception and had history of low iron levels should take iron supplements. Iron supplements are best absorbed in chelated form and in combination with folic, vitamin C and B12. Medications taken before or during pregnancy can interfere with the way our body absorbs, utilizes, and excretes micronutrients. For example, antibiotics can hinder the availability of some B vitamins, vitamin C, potassium and calcium. And because they can destroy bacteria in the intestines, antibiotics also interfere with the synthesis of vitamin K, an important vitamin that helps in blood clotting.

Hormone-containing drugs like birth control pills appear to lower levels of some vitamins, including vitamin B6, folic acid and vitamin C. Caffeine containing foods such as coffee inhibit the body's ability to absorb iron by as much as 85%; drinking more than two cups of coffee a day has been implicated in calcium imbalance as well. A mild diuretic, caffeine can also cause you to lose potassium, magnesium and other minerals through your urine. Smoking or inhaling secondhand smoke interferes with your metabolism of B vitamins and more than doubles your vitamin C requirement.

References:

See Also:

Need more iron

Hormones

The ovaries serve the dual function of producing eggs and hormones. Progesterone is produced by the corpus luteum that develops from the follicle after the egg is shed. It prepares the uterus for successful implantation, growth of the embryo and maintenance of pregnancy. It is controlled in part by the central nervous system. Some environmental inputs can affect the secretions of gonadotropin hormones (estrogen, progesterone): rapid travel across time zones, stress, anxiety and other emotional changes. These inputs also influence the maturity of birth and may determine the occurrence of premature birth.

The pacemaker for rhythmic release of these hormones resides in the hypothalamus and the timekeeper for the slower monthly rhythm of the ovarian cycle resides in the ovary. Sources of food which balances female hormones contain omega fatty acids that can be found in fish products, flax seed, tofu and others. Birth pills can disrupt hormonal balance as well as other nutritional needs of the body such as magnesium, vitamin B6 and C and other nutrients.

The table below lists the effects of Estrogen and Progesterone on the reproductive tract.

Organ	Estrogen	Progesterone
Oviducts lining muscular walls	increased cilia formation and activity increased contractility	increased secretion decreased contractility
Uterus endometrium myometrium cervical glands	increased proliferation increased growth and contractility watery secretions	increased differentiation and secretion decreased contractility dense, viscous secretion (egg white consistency and stretchiness indicates ovulation coupled with increased body temp by as much as 1°F)
Breasts	development of breasts stimulates stromal proliferation and fat deposition (some forms of breast cancer remain partially dependent on estrogen for growth)	

Pelvis	cause selective changes in bone structure such as widening of the pelvis w/c aids in the birth process	
Vagina	increased epithelial proliferation increased glycogen deposition	increased differentiation decreased proliferation

Menstruation, the shedding of the endometrial lining is the result of the loss of estrogen and progesterone when the corpus luteum regresses. An ovarian cycle lasts about 28 days and consists of a follicular phase (~12-14 days) in which the follicle grows to maturity, ovulation (~1 day), and a luteal phase (~12-14 days) in which the corpus luteum functions for its programmed lifespan.

Herbs with Hormonal Effects

Chaste Tree/Vitex

Active components are extracted from the dried, ripened fruits and the root bark of **Vitex agnus-castus**. The root bark has both free and conjugated forms of progesterone and hydroxyprogesterone which are also present in the leaves and flowers. Testosterone and epitestosterone were detected in the flower parts. The herb is claimed to have anti-inflammatory, antiandrogenic, progesterone-like, and antimicrobial effects. Recently isolated flavonoids exhibit antineoplastic activity and studies with rats have shown a hypotolactinemic effect. It is also claimed to be useful for several endocrine and female reproductive tract disorders, including menstrual cycle regulation, uterine bleeding, ovarian insufficiency, aiding lactation, and combating acne.

Wild Yam

Wild yam contains steroidal saponins, diosgenin, diosgenin, DHEA, phytosterols, alkaloids and tannins. DHEA, a constituent of wild yam, is a steroid hormone produced in the adrenal gland in humans; it is the most abundant adrenocorticoid hormone in the body. DHEA is believed to be useful in several conditions, including AIDS, Alzheimer's disease, CV disease, cancer, hypercholesterolemia, multiple sclerosis, obesity, psychological disorders and systemic lupus erythematosus. Wild yam is claimed to be useful in stomach and muscle cramps, menopausal symptoms, pain in the womb and ovaries and as an antispasmodic or diaphoretic.

See also:

[Postpartum Healing Ways](#)

References:

Johnson L. Essential Medical Physiology. Lippincot Raven Publisher, 1998

Northrup C. Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom. Bantam Books, 1995

Breastfeeding Problems

Sore Nipples

When my baby was about four weeks old, I saw a black spot on my nipple which seems to me dried blood. I felt pain every time the baby sucks my breast. I feel relieved after my midwife had shown me the right way the baby should suck on my breast and not on my nipple. I also applied breastmilk itself and some Vitamin E. After a few days the soreness was gone. Constanica

During the early weeks of breastfeeding some mothers feel soreness in their nipples that may have blister, crack or bleed. Be calm for nipple soreness will heal after a few weeks. The following should be noted:

Breast suck not nipple suck. The nipple and about one half of the areola should be well back in the baby's mouth. Bring the baby swiftly to the breast when the mouth is open wide enough. Press the baby's lower jaw to allow the baby's mouth to suck most of the areola.

Apply nipple care such as do not use soap or creams. Do not wash your nipples before the next feeding; nipple should be blotted dry and aired after feeding; apply scant amount of lanolin; do not wear any tight bra or wear no bra at all; do not pull the baby's mouth when breaking the suction but place your little finger in the corner of the baby's mouth between the baby's gums.

Allow the Milk Ejection Reflex (MER) to occur by: relaxing; baby sucking the less sore breast first; hand expressing until the MER occurs; use varied breastfeeding positions to exert pressure to the less tender spot.

Mastitis Stories

My CNM prescribed an antibiotic and echinacea, Vitamin E, chelated iron tabs, warm soaks for breasts, vitamin C, rests, proper positioning and Tylenol for fever.

I wrap a cloth around my chest on the upper part of my breast which enables the breastmilk to slowly drip.

She took a hot bath, massaged, used combing motion, took echinacea and ibuprophen, nursed the baby and it was still there, hard as can be. She thought it wasn't going to work, but she woke up in the morning and it was GONE!

Nursing Herbs

To increase flow and supply: fennel, chamomile, bedstraw, hops, lavender, milkwort, blessed thistle, alfalfa, anise seed, fenugreek, sassafras, squaw vine

To decrease flow: sage, parsley

Engorgement: marshmallow, comfrey

Sore nipples: squaw vine poultice containing crushed squaw vine berries mixed with myrrh, almond oil, wheat germ oil, St. John's wort

Breast infections: mulline, comfrey, lobelia, elder blossoms, apple cider vinegar, comfrey, echinacea

Notes: Rice is used for weaning in the Philippines. Any solid foods are capable of decreasing the need of a baby to nurse.

See also:

The Newborn after the Baby's Birth

Conscious Mothering/Parenting

If only mothers could see their babies through the babies' little eyes and feel their bodies every moment. Real attachment grows and unconditional love evolves. Every time we massage our babies and talk to them, we are helping them build trust and confidence in us. Having a good start in our pregnancies by talking to our baby inside our womb, gives us the right connection.

We might not know it, but we are actually passing positive energy or some spiritual touch to our unborn babies. My own experience with midwifery care strengthened my conscious mothering role. Midwifery standards of care includes proper nutrition, mother and infant massage, use of herbs and other natural remedies, partner's conscious participation from pregnancy and beyond, enlisting other support groups, care of women's bodies, empowering women and many more coping skills.

As a new mother, we will be practicing conscious mothering using our own style and personality. Some of us have enough courage to birth at home, are more resourceful to find alternative ways and more determined to breastfeed even while working.

I admit that my upbringing has shaped my mothering skills. There are many ways that we can allow human nature to work successfully. My mother is my role model in areas of childbirth for she birthed at home. Though I would not circumcise my child as she did as dictated by her society where circumcision was considered the male rite of passage into adulthood.

We all try to find many ways to give the best to our babies. We can start by knowing the many alternative choices of caring for our babies and our bodies. When we are miles away from our mothers, we use other resources such as books, support groups, and classes.

Communicate and connect with others for it can:

ease your pregnancy, labor, birthing and your entire mothering period.

provide a sense of responsibility and belonging to other members of the family or groups of friends

directly influence the child in the mother's womb

create a wholesome feeling about your body, your sexual desires, your capacity to birth and breastfeed your baby

heighten the relationship between partners and other members of the family during and after pregnancy

See also:

Childbirth Education

Cultural Practices

One way of sharing the nurturing practices that we give to mothers and babies is through our cultural lifestyles and practices. Please email me at connie@motherhealth.com for other cultural practices that you know about concerning caring for women during their childbearing years.

In some rural places in the Philippines, a pregnant woman is a sign of blessings. She brings in good fortune. Children are considered as wealth. Families filled their homes with display of certificates or diplomas of their educated children. For poor families, children are viewed as source of income later on when they can earn for a living.

The mother of a pregnant mother is the doula or the care giver after the baby is born. The father is viewed as always the provider. A midwife called "Komadrona" who attends to the birth. She or another person massage the mother during pregnancy, labor, and after delivering the baby. The midwife only needs boiled water to attend to the laboring mother.

After delivering the baby, the mother's stomach is wrapped by a piece of cloth and massaged every three days for two months to ensure that the uterus goes back to its proper place. Rice when served to the baby or red pepper applied to the nipples is used to wean the baby after a few years of nursing. The average year of nursing length is four years. The juice from a freshly cut young coconut is used as a supplemental food for the baby. It is also used during the last trimester of pregnancy to ease labor.

The wish of a pregnant woman is always respected. She is not provoked or argued with since her emotions affect the unborn child. Herbs are used during pregnancy, labor, and postpartum.

The liquid from boiled guava leaves is used for cleansing the mother during postpartum. It serves as an antiseptic medication. Coconut oil is the most popularly used massage oil. Clams or any shell fish are served as soup to the mother during the last trimester of pregnancy and during nursing to increase the milk supply. The breast is also massaged during pregnancy to prepare the breast for nursing.

When in labor and the baby is breach (baby's head close to mom's heart), a massage therapist can bring the baby to its desired position, head first. Incense is used with the sitz bath remedy while the mother is wrapped in a hot towel during postpartum. A preparation with charcoal and herbs (indirectly applied to the mother's bottom) is used as the sitz bath itself. Boiled rain water is also used. Sex is resumed only after three months. In the cities of the Philippines, the same practice applies depending upon the availability of the lay midwife, massage therapist, and the environment.

In Taiwan, a postpartum mother is placed in a communal place with the

care of doulas together with other postpartum mothers. For about two months, they are cared for. This kind of service exist solely for mothering the mother.

In Ethiopia, the mother is also cared for the first three months during postpartum by relatives or helpers. Though circumcision for girls is still prevalent in some areas, educated women tend to do away with it.

In Russia, it is common to nurse more than one baby when supply is great.

A mother who is in the same hospital room with other new mothers who also just delivered babies recalled how one mother volunteered to nurse her baby while her breast is still coping up with its supply of milk.

Advice from folks in the Philippines:

You should not nap in the afternoon that long since you might have difficulty in delivering a bigger baby.

Drink the juice of a young coconut for easy labor.

See Also:

Emergency Childbirth

Discomfort during Pregnancy

Discomforts in your body tells you that your body is adjusting to the growing needs of the baby. Most of the common discomforts during pregnancy are caused by hormonal changes and/or anatomical changes such as enlarged uterus or engorged breasts. Listen to your body, slow down your hectic schedule, seek advice from midwives, mothers and other childbirth professionals.

Talk to your health care provider (doctor or midwife) often especially during your regular prenatal appointments so that you can learn the preventive measures. Examples of things that help prevent problems for you and your baby are: taking dietary supplements or herbs, changing in lifestyles or activities and learning about your body and the growing baby. Red raspberry leaf when taken as a tea is excellent in preparing the uterus for pregnancy, labor and birth. The following discomforts which may or may not be experienced by some women are arranged according to their major occurrence during pregnancy.

Back Pain

To avoid or decrease back pain during your pregnancy, maintain a correct posture with the abdomen drawn in and the back and knees straight. Lifting heavy or awkward objects should be avoided during pregnancy if at all possible. When lifting, the objects must be held close to the body with the knees bent and the back kept straight to put the strain on the thigh

muscles and not those of the back.

Pelvic rocks which combines hip movement and rocking the pelvis in back and forward motion helps tone the muscles and improve circulation. Pelvic tilts are also good for toning the muscles and ligaments that support the internal organs and easing tensions. Pelvic tilts are done by lying on your back with knees bent and feet flat. Tighten the abdominals and buttocks and press the small of the back down or scoop the sacrum into the floor repeatedly at least for 6 times or more and breathe. It can be done by either sitting, standing or lying.

Massaging the lumbar region of the spine using long, deep and downward strokes eases low back pain. Most back tension releases really well by working the thumbs slowly and deeply along the long muscles of the spine, over the sacrum and through the buttocks. Sleeping on your sides provides relief for your back. Swimming during the last trimester especially offloads your body with the growing weight of the baby.

In most countries in the Far East, women tend to spend more time squatting as they do their daily chores. Squatting, swimming and walking are good exercises. Massage is as common as bathing. A stroke or massage in the lower back with massage oil such as olive, calendula, almond or coconut oil helps backache problems. Check your doctor or care giver for kidney problems.

"If back pains increase or get worse, or you are experiencing kidney pain, check with your health care providers. Sometimes women have kidney stones or muscle spasms during pregnancy. And of course, any sort of persistent or intermittent low back pain could indicate preterm labor, or possibly an infection." Pat Sonnenstuhl, CNM

Universal Herbs for Back Pain: Minerals such as Calcium (Chamomile, Fennel), Cobalt (Dandelion, Red Clover), Iron (Yellow Dock, Rosemary, Ginseng, Burdock), Magnesium (Alfalfa, Catnip, Red Clover, Valerian), Vitamin K (Rose hips, Cayenne), Zinc (Licorice, Sarsaparilla) and Vitamin C (Bee pollen, chickweed, comfrey, echinacea, garlic, juniper berries, peppermint, Saluyot in the Philippines and rose hips).

Nausea and Vomiting

Extreme nausea of pregnancy seems to be related to the very high levels of the pregnancy hormones some women experience during the first few months of pregnancy. And these hormones maintain their proper balance by about the fourth month of pregnancy.

A light full body massage oxygenates the body. I experienced nausea and vomiting during my second pregnancy with my daughter. Taking ginger capsule and eating crackers early in the morning before getting up from my bed helped me. The combination of walking, fresh air, avoiding greasy or highly seasoned foods, using the power of the mind, and relaxing also

helped in controlling nausea and vomiting. Eat small, frequent meals and dry foods with fluids between meals.

I know of a friend who took birth control pills for a long time and then experienced extreme nausea and vomiting during her pregnancy. Sometimes taking birth control pills before pregnancy can deplete a woman of the B vitamins, so these need to be added to the diet. Vitamin B6 100 mg can be very helpful taken two or three times a day. My midwife's advice is to eat nuts since they stay longer in the stomach because of their high protein content.

In Europe, mothers apply ice cold washcloth to their eyes when nauseous. Drinking lots of water and eating something (in small amounts) every two hours also prevents nausea and vomiting. In China, acupuncture points on the wrists (or sea bands) can help in nausea. If vomiting persists longer than 24 hours be sure you discuss this with your health care provider. They might have other suggestions, or might want to do some specific tests to rule out more serious conditions.

Universal Herbs for Nausea: Ginger and Vitamin B6 (Hawthorne, Licorice, Papaya), peach leaf, blackberries, red raspberry, peppermint, wild yam, anise, cinnamon, cloves, oregano. The lemon scent sometimes helps women get through this difficult time.

Heartburn and Gas

Eat small, more frequent meals. Lie down and do abdominal breathing. Try some pelvic rocks. Pay attention to which foods and spices bring on heartburn and gas. Check your food combination (fruit with heavy protein is not good) and avoid overeating. Avoid offending foods such as fatty and fried foods, beans, tofu, carbonation, etc. Eat papaya. If you get pain after eating spicy foods, perhaps your gallbladder is acting up. Again, persistent pain of any type needs to be reported to your health care provider.

Universal Herbs: Angelica, borage, cayenne, peppermint, valerian, wintergreen, holy thistle, papaya

Constipation

Caused by decreased motility of the digestive system, drinking lots of fluids and eating lots of fiber can help prevent constipation. Avoid laxatives. Try prunes, prune juice or carrot juice. Eat plenty of raw greens and bran which are high fiber foods and any fresh and dried fruits. Eat banana in moderation. Drink a lot of fluids especially water. Exercise daily. Squat on the toilet or use a box or stool for elevating feet to facilitate bowel movements. Develop regular bowel habits.

Hemorrhoids

Closely related to constipation is hemorrhoids. Some of the same

suggestions apply: Rub Vitamin E oil directly on the anus. Eat lots of fruits. A mother in the Far East cautions from over eating spicy foods, intoxicating liquors, white bread, sugar, fried foods and all acid-forming foods which cause fermentation. Drink at least a pint of fresh fruit or vegetable juice each day.

Avoid taking ordinary purgatives that are on the market as they irritate the membranous lining of the bowels and intestines. Drink more fluids. Put feet on a small stool while sitting on the toilet for bowel movement. Do pelvic rocks and lots of pelvic floor exercises. Take sitz baths (shallow and hot for the parts of you where you sits). Apply witch hazel or a commercial preparation and rectal poultice of chamomile leaves and white oak bark powder. Try to lie down or at least get off your feet part of the day. Gently tuck the hemorrhoid back up into the rectum with a lubricated finger for instant relief.

Herbs: ginger, witch hazel (external), burdock, plaintain, yarrow

For external suppository, mix the following with glycerine, stiff enough to form suppository and insert it into the rectum at night and leaving it:

2 oz of powdered Hemlock Bark, 1 oz of Golden Seal, 1 oz of powdered wheat flour, 1 oz of Boric acid, 1 oz of Bayberry bark

Bleeding Gums

Be certain you are not anemic, and be very gentle on your gums during pregnancy. Use a soft toothbrush. Increase your intake of Vitamin C and calcium. Floss regularly and see your dentist. Try applying white oak bark powder to your gums or use white oak bark tea for swishing around on the inside of the mouth. Brush with equal parts of golden seal and myrrh three times a day.

Herbs: Shepherd's purse and wild alum root

Mild Blood Pressure

Lie on your left side and have someone massage you with slow, firm hand. Relaxation can help lower an elevated blood pressure. Eat foods containing garlic, ginger and onions.

Swelling/Ankle Edema

Lying on your side or elevating your feet can help relieve swelling and edema. Sitting or standing for long periods of time can promote edema. Drink lots of fluids to promote good tissue balance. Soaking in the bathtub can help relieve the edema too. Putting your feet up, high fluid intake. Eating plenty of protein rich food. are important. Consult your health care provider if you have sudden edema, blinding headaches or there is protein in the urine coupled with a high blood pressure and swelling.

Insomnia

Do a facial (around the eyes, the jaw and the top of the neck beneath the

occiput), head and neck massage before going to bed. Drink chamomile tea and use lots of pillows. Eat some protein and avoid sugary foods at bedtime. Some women find a cup of hot chocolate milk helps them sleep. Keep food at the side of your bed should you be hungry in the middle of the night.

Leg Cramps

Press the point in the center of the calf for relief. Also, flex the foot towards you with hard pressure or dorsiflex foot to stretch affected muscle. Eat calcium rich foods and take a calcium/magnesium supplement before going to bed. Sleeping on the right or left side helps (with lots of pillows for support) prevent leg cramps and doesn't impede the blood vessels responsible for baby's oxygenation.

Varicose Veins

Do not massage directly and deeply on a swollen vein. Superficial, general massage toward the heart is helpful and preventative. Red spiderlike veins are broken blood vessels not varicose veins and can be massaged. If the area becomes painful, tender or swollen, notify your health care provider. Some women with varicose veins in the vaginal area are helped by wearing knit bicycle pants which provide good support for the vaginal area. Arrange frequent opportunities to put your legs up to promote improved blood flow.

Urinary Frequency

Continue to drink at least 8 glasses of water, and go to the bathroom frequently. Frequency is caused in early pregnancy by the uterus pressing on the bladder with a growing fetus. Towards the end of pregnancy, it's usually the baby's head

Dyspnea/Shortness of breath

This is usually related to the increased levels of fluids your body is producing. At mid pregnancy you are carrying about 50% more fluids than when you are not pregnant. Some of this is within your body tissues, and some are contributed by your amniotic fluid. Maintain proper posture when sitting and standing. When sleeping on either sides, prop up on pillows on both sides. If you smoke, decrease or stop smoking, as this decreases good oxygenation to you and your baby.

Increased Vaginal Discharge

Bath daily and avoid douching, nylon panty hose/underpants. Wear cotton underwear. If you have a cheesy discharge or yeast infection, cut on your sugar intake and wash with diluted vinegar or tea tree oil (Tea tree oil has antibacterial and antifungal activity in vitro). After urinating, always clean from your vagina back towards your rectum.

See Also:

Doula

If you happen to find out about any doula (lay labor support) services in your area, please email me (connie@motherhealth.com) so that we can compile a list of names for other moms. Doulas support the laboring mother and provide varied services from childbirth education to postpartum support. They support the mother in all aspects of her pregnancy. Studies have shown reduced cesaerean operations among mothers who have doulas with them before and during birth. In the absence of a midwife or nurse midwife in the hospital, Doulas are there to be mom's advocate in the birthing experience she so desires.

I provide doula services in the Silicon Valley area and you may email me if you are personally interested. Doulas can help shorten labor and be your ally in the hospital. They can help create miracles for birthing families.

See also:

A poem for mothers

Emergency Childbirth

Emergency Childbirth: When Baby Arrives Before the Midwife or Doctor

Most births are spontaneous and normal. The baby is crafted for survival. Relax and do the following after contacting the midwife or doctor who is on her way:

1. Move her to a comfortable place away from the toilet. Call for help.
2. Make sure the room is warm and draft free. Remember that baby needs a warm environment. A clean, dry towel and a hat should be ready for the baby.
3. Prepare a bowl of warm water with provolone iodine solution and a clean cloth in it. Place a clean under pad under the mother with the paper side next to her skin. Place another empty bowl (to catch the placenta later on) in close proximity together with scissors, gauze, bulb syringe and cord clamp. Put all items gathered on a clean towel.
4. Wash your hands thoroughly. Tear open several packs of 4 x 4's sterile gauze. Put gloves on if available.
5. As the head starts emerging, put gentle counter pressure against the bulging perineum. Don't touch anything except the mother and baby so as not to contaminate. As the baby's head starts emerging, remind the mother that she will feel the "ring of fire" which is normal.
6. Place a gauze 4 x 4 over the mother's anus, to prevent contamination. wipe the feces away, if necessary, and place a clean 4 x 4 over the anus. Make sure you don't contaminate the gloves or your hands.
7. Ask the mother to pant as the head crowns and is born. Support the mother's perineum with both hands.
8. When head is out, slide your fingers in along the baby's neck to feel for the umbilical cord. If you feel the cord, try slipping it over the baby's head. If you can't, it's usually not a problem to leave it, unless it is too tight and keeps the baby from coming out.
9. If the cord is very tight: with your fingers placed between the baby's neck and cord, clamp with two hemostats or two cord clamps in two spots an inch apart.
10. Make sure you put both clamps on next to each other on the same piece of cord. Carefully cut between the two clamps and unwind the cord from baby's neck. Keep both clamps on and be sure they are clamped tightly.
11. If the bag of waters is still around the baby's face, as it is born, tear the bag by pinching it apart with your fingers.
12. Wipe the baby's face with a gauze 4 x 4. Use the syringe to suction the

baby, if needed. While keeping the bulb syringe squeezed, gently place the tip (sweeping from the side) in baby's mouth and release the bulb syringe. Spray contents onto a gauze 4 x 4. Do the same for both nostrils.

13. Ask the mother to push as the baby rotates to face one of the mother's leg. With one hand under baby's head and the other on top of it, exert gentle pressure downward pressure on the baby's head to facilitate the delivery of the top shoulder.

14. When the top shoulder is out about two or three inches, lift upward on the baby's head to help the bottom shoulder come out. The baby's body will follow. Hold the baby (with her/his face down) with your two hands since the baby is slippery.

15. Place the baby on mother's belly with mom lying on her back and both in tummy to tummy position. Cover the baby and put her/his hat on. Make sure you don't pull the umbilical cord.

16. As soon as the cord stops pulsating, you can cut the cord. Attach cord clamp securely 1/2 inch from baby's belly button. Place gauze under the cord. Cut cord 1/2 inch away from the clamp on the other side (away from the baby).

17. Baby should be pink. If baby is bluish, white or limp and not crying, do the following: Run your fingers up the baby's spine, massaging vigorously. Flick baby's feet with your fingers. Having mother talk to baby, continue the above. Keep baby warm and dry.

18. If baby is still not responding and it has been one minute since birth, begin mouth to mouth resuscitation with gentle puffs from your cheeks. Keep baby warm and dry and have someone call the emergency personnel.

19. Watch for signs that the placenta is detaching such as a gush of blood, the cord gets longer and mother feels more contractions.

20. When the above happens: wrap gauze around section of the cord, so it's not so slick. Place opposite hand against mother's pubic bone and press gently inward and upward. Ask mother to give little push with the next contraction. using gentle cord traction, guide the cord downward as you see the placenta start to emerge, lift upward with the cord to help placenta out.

21. Wipe and warm the baby by wrapping the baby well and putting the baby on mother's breast, apply CPR if necessary, wait for the midwife or doctor to cut the cord, let the mother massage her uterus and stay with the mother.

See Also:

Fathers

Fathers

The art of fathering comes from experience and through modeling from the nurturing skills of mothers before us. When you and your partner work together from the moment of conception (i.e., attending childbirth classes together, interviewing care givers like doctors/midwives) till the baby is growing and needing both of your time, your mothering is easy and your marriage grows stronger. The father will also feel that joyful sacrifice that you feel. He will then understand why you behave in such way and how to be there at the right time for you and your baby. Fathers are also like expectant mothers, anxious of their new role as fathers. They are now serious in making more money for the new addition to the family. They view themselves as provider and giver of financial stability.

Frequently, because everyone is thinking As everyone thinks of the mother's needs, the father is left on his own to fulfill his own emotional needs. He usually senses the need to be involved with own the birth of the baby and take part in the unfolding of this new life, but sometimes isn't just just what he can and should do. He needs affirmation and praise for the work he does and the involvement he has.knows that he should also be patted on his back for he needs the reassurance that everything will work well. We should accept the many roles of our partner, the father of our babies, and learn to accept them where they are in their own parenting and fathering roles.

"I remember one father telling me how left out he felt of the breastfeeding experience, especially in the baby's first few months of life. As his child grew, he saw things he could do, and was a wonderful, nurturing father. It is a wonderful, joyous and challenging learning experience for all." Pat Sonnenstuhl, CNM

The various roles a father takes in pregnancy,labor, birth and afterwards are: provider,birth assistant, massage therapist, health care giver at home, lover, nurturer, companion, friend and the list goes on and on.

Today's fathers are more involved than ever in caring for their families and that the positive effect of their involvement touched all aspects of their lives. They were more likely to have successful careers, happy marriages, and to be leaders in the community. And their kids shared the success - sons and daughters of supportive fathers enjoyed more success in school and work.

An expectant father's feelings should be validated in the same way we validate a mother's feelings. After all, family-centered birth will drive the trend towards a more humane way of birthing, the real American way of birth.

To My Postpartum Wife

I am your partner, the father of our baby

I would like to care for our baby if not as much as you do
I wouldn't like to see our baby given up to strange baby sitters
I wouldn't like to see you cook, clean house, do the laundry or entertain
You will be given a helper, a doula, or an assistant
If not on our bed, you will be sitting on your rocking chair, wearing your nursing gown when resting
You shall honor me with my share of household chores
Take long walks in places with clean air, eat healthy food and drink much water and juice
Welcome with you friendly and helpful visitors with good baby advice.
Sleep when baby sleeps so that your nursing will go unimpeded.
I am your husband and I will give you the energy and environment conducive for both you and our baby.
Your partner in love, at your service

See also:

Having sex before and after the babys is born

Letter from a Midwife

Dear Connie,

I often wonder just where to begin the discussion of homebirth, natural birth and the powers of women's bodies.

Sometimes the goal is only to get people to agree that homebirth is a safe choice for those who choose it period. There is no use trying to get a Republican to become part of the Green party. We can only take baby steps to educate and spread the truth.

Let us remember three out of four babies are born at home in the world. The U.S.A. mortality rate is astonishingly high for a "1st world" country. Labeling childbirth as painful and frightening is buying into the medical model. Pregnancy is not an illness and birth needs no management. Our bodies may be corporeal but they are not savage and feeling their sensations is a pleasure and quite empowering.

Keep spreading the word Connie. Birth is as safe as life gets.

Erin Ryan, Certified Nurse Midwife

Having Sex before and after the baby is born

The sexual hormones during pregnancy is high. The woman's body is warmer during pregnancy because of the growing fetus inside her and her tissues are very sensitive. Having sex before the baby is chemically beneficial especially during the last trimester since the semen is rich in prostaglandin, an essential hormone which stimulates labor.

Eating fish which is rich in omega fatty acids also stimulates the production of prostaglandin. In a hospital birth a prostaglandin gel is sometimes applied to the cervix to ripen it and initiate labor. Sex after the baby's birth should not happen until the sixth week after the baby was born or until the mother's tissues are healed and she is comfortable to make love again.

It is interesting to note the different feelings of pregnant women about their interest in sex.

"During the last trimester of pregnancy, I feel uncomfortable because of the size of my belly. I still feel the same interest in sex the whole length of my pregnancy. I just have to communicate a lot with my partner regarding my feelings when making love. Overall, my interest in sex increased throughout pregnancy maybe because I don't have to worry about unwanted pregnancy and plus my partner finds me more warm." Veronica, Russia

"I think giving birth and making love both require intimacy. This is one reason why I wanted a woman to assist me in birthing my baby. I became so focused when I delivered my baby in my house with my husband. I have the same calming attitude in birthing the baby as in making love." Divina, Philippines

"My sexuality and interest in making love disappeared during the last trimester for fear that it may affect the baby." Rose, California

"My size in the last trimester made intercourse difficult. Thanks to one article about ways of making love when pregnant, it made it easier for me and my husband." Cristy, Bulgaria

"Wives' bodies should always serve their husbands. That is our culture." Hana, Ethiopia

See also:

Midwives

Women's Bodies

Healing Ways for a Cut and an Episiotomy

Care for episiotomies and tears

cold sanitary pads or sitz bath with equal amount of (three tablespoons) witch hazel astringent and herbs solution containing comfrey leaf/root, uva ursi, golden seal, sage, myrrh, salt.

drinking liquid every hour or 30 minutes after birth; eating foods that will not constipate; drink prune juice.

stand for a while hours after birth; exposing to air and sun few minutes 15-20 minutes in the morning and afternoon.

See Also:

Postpartum Healing Ways

Herbs and Nutrition

Homebirth

Why Homebirth with Midwives?

The desire for the strongest possible bonding between newborn and family. Family-centered care during and after pregnancy.

The desire to be in control of the birth without unnecessary medical intervention.

The personal satisfaction derived from the care of midwives and chosen attendants. The continuity of care and personal touch they afford.

The comforting and familiar setting of home.

The related benefits derived from homebirth such as ease of getting started in breastfeeding, the use of herbal remedies, safer procedures that respects a woman's body, the use of massage/acupressure and many more holistic healing ways.

Homebirth reduces stress and anxiety by:

providing a relaxed, safe, and comfortable place for the patient to undergo labor in

encouraging the patient to be in control of her labor

allowing the patient to have supportive, loving people around her

allowing the patient to walk around, to eat, and drink and to choose the most comfortable position during labor

practicing relaxation techniques to reduce stress

ensuring constant attendance by the midwife or physician and attendants assisting in the labor and delivery.

Statistics

The rate of Caesarean (major abdominal surgeries) operations is very low for midwives and homebirths, compared to hospital births. Part of the reason for this low rate is the fact that most homebirths are not high risk. But more importantly, midwives aren't in a hurry. They do not have the institutional time pressures that come along with hospital births. And, it has never been shown that shorter labors are safer than longer ones.

For midwives, labor and childbirth are a natural process and, unless distress to the mother or baby is indicated, this process is not interfered with through drugs, medical equipment or Caesarean operation.

Homebirth allows for the full participation of family members. Under the guidance and assistance of a midwife, the opportunity is available for husbands or partners to "catch" their child as it is born. These moments can be very powerful and transformational in the lives of new parents.

Babies

At homebirths, babies are immediately placed on the mom's stomach or breast, providing security, warmth and immediate bonding between mom and baby. This contact provides an additional measure of security for both mom and baby.

Family

At homebirths, family and friends frequently join together in support of the birthing family. Husbands or partners may be very important to the birthing mom during this time. The midwife can help fill the primary support role if other support is not available to a single mom.

Usually someone other than the mom or her partner assumes responsibility for any children who are present, freeing mom to focus on birthing. Another adult may be a designated photographer if desired.

Midwife

The midwife helps to calm people who are present at the birth. Tension in a room can slow down or stop a labor. The midwife manages these situations so the mom and her partner can continue to focus on the birthing process. The personal touch and the continuity of care of a midwife is very valuable especially for the first time mother who needs to know how to start breastfeeding, care for her baby and her body.

Because homebirth families are well prepared, the birthing process can feel quite natural. They can let go of any fear surrounding birth and trust the process instead. If difficulties occur along the way, they are calmly resolved.

During labor the partner and family nurture the mom. The midwife is watchful for any complications or signs of distress in either the mom or the baby. Throughout labor, the midwife asks permission to perform various procedures and explains to the mom and family what she is doing and why.

Birthing Process

The birthing process is allowed to take its own course and set its own pace. The general philosophy is that any interventions (administering drugs or trying to hurry things along) can create more harm than good. In the safety and security of her own home, the mom is likely to be less inhibited about trying different labor positions and locations.

She can sit on the toilet or go for a walk outside. She can eat or drink whatever she wants. She writes her own script. When it's time to deliver, she can often try whatever position she wants: on her side, squatting, sitting or kneeling.

Complications

Occasionally, there will be complications during labor. The midwife is trained to recognize early stages of complications and to take necessary

action. Transport to the hospital during the course of the birthing process may be necessary for the health of either the mother or baby.

To promote a smooth transition in this situation, some midwives have their pregnant moms pre-register at a nearby hospital. Husbands or other designated individuals are advised on directions to the hospital, as well as to have fuel in the car, or other means of transport pre-arranged. An often overlooked point is for the car to be equipped with a proper infant seat to facilitate the return trip from the hospital.

In the rare case when the baby has difficulty breathing on its own, midwives are fully trained in infant CPR. Usually, putting the baby right to the breast and having mom talk to her baby will encourage it to take those first breaths.

Postpartum

Putting the baby immediately to the breast helps reduce any bleeding the mom may have. The sucking action stimulates the uterus and causes it to contract. This closes off blood vessels and reduces bleeding.

The first moments of interactions between mother and baby are a sacred time, a time to be honored. This is baby's special bonding time with its parents and all the family and friends present. When a baby is born, all that baby wants is to be loved and taken care of. This early bonding allows them to relax and feel secure. The midwife makes sure that the needs of the mother and baby during postpartum (after birth) are met.

Breastmilk

The mother's milk supply usually comes on the third or fourth day after birth. Prior to that, the baby is drinking a substance called colostrum, which has many antibodies to help fight bacteria and build up the baby's immune system. It is also rich in vitamins and protein. The midwife will offer encouragement and support in getting started to successfully breastfeed.

Infections

Some members of the medical community have recently acknowledged that having a homebirth decreases the mother's and baby's chances of contracting an infection. The mother is used to the bacteria in her own environment and has built up immunities to it. This is passed on to the baby through the colostrum. Even when women are segregated in maternity wards, infections are much more commonplace after hospital births than homebirths.

A mother who is tired after a Caesarian operation could not attend to her baby during the first hour of the baby's life and during her own healing process.

One of the benefits of homebirth is that after the birth and special bonding time, mom and baby can be tucked into their own bed in the comfort of

their home to rest and sleep. The husband or partner can join them for rest and deeper bonding.

Commitment and Responsible Parenthood

The most successful homebirthers are those who have a strong commitment to it and who trust in their body's natural ability to birth. They are often willing to devote time and energy to finding the right birth practitioner, to doing their own research, attend childbirth classes, and to take better care of themselves through proper nutrition, conscious living and making the choices that are good for the baby and mom.

Family-centered Care

Homebirths with midwives have the following in common:

no electronic fetal monitors

no IVs to keep mom hydrated

no artificial rupture of membranes

no forceps or vacuum extractors, even with long pushing phases

no inductions for "failure to progress", even with long pushing phases

no drugs of any kind before the baby's birth

no episiotomies

no one hollered at the mom to PUSH as pushing is self-directed, according to the mom's urge to bear down.

no separation in the new family after birth

no routine suctioning of babies; only if needed

no cord cutting until well after delivery of the placenta

no limit on food, drinks, numbers of people present, positions, and other holistic birthing ways

And best of all, mothers get to birth in their own way, in their own time, in the place they feel most comfortable. This is how we should welcome our babies.

See also:

Doula

Studies:

RECENT BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL THAT FEATURED
HOMEBIRTH

British Medical Journal editorial 1996

"Home birth, Safe in selected women, and with adequate infrastructure

and support"

British Medical Journal vol 313, No 7068, pp 1276-7.

Davies J, et al 1996

"Prospective regional study of planned home birth"

British Medical Journal vol 313, No 7068, pp 1302 - 6

Northern Region Perinatal Mortality Survey Group 1996

"Collaborative survey of perinatal loss in planned and unplanned home births"

British Medical Journal vol 313, No 7068, pp 1306 - 9

Wiegers T et al 1996

"Outcome of planned home and planned hospital births in low risk pregnancies: prospective study in midwifery practices in the Netherlands"

British Medical Journal vol 313, No 7068, pp 1309 - 1313

AcKermann-Liebrich U. et al 1996

"Home versus Hospital deliveries: follow up study of matched pairs for procedures and outcome"

British Medical Journal Vol 313, No 7068, pp 1313 - 1318

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Infant Massage

Touch and massage are simple forms of communication. The baby's skin is more sensitive than that of an adult. Massage lightly with the surface of your fingers and palm. Start from the hands and feet.

Use calendula oil or another natural, light oil such as Almond or Arnica oil. This oil can be used as postnatal care:

- loosen and relaxes the new baby
- gently removes the cradle cap on baby's head
- protects baby's delicate skin

Other aromatherapy oil for postnatal care can consist of St John's Wort, Arnica, Calendula oil, Betula, Vitamin E and pure essential oils of Chamomile, Lavender, Rosemary, sweet Almond and Olive oils.

See also:

Breastfeeding

Pregnancy Humor

Please email (connie@motherhealth.com) me if you have any humor related to pregnancy and baby care that you wish to share with others.

Question	Answer
Am I more likely to get pregnant if my husband wears boxers rather than briefs?	Yes, but you'll have an even better chance if he doesn't wear anything at all.
What do you call a pregnancy that begins while using birth control?	A misconception.
What is the difference between a Direct Entry Midwife (DEM) and a Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM)?	Seven years of education for CNM and at least seven years of apprenticeship for DEM.
Can a woman get pregnant from a toilet seat?	Yes, but the baby would be awfully funny looking.
What is the easiest way to figure out exactly when I got pregnant?	Have sex once a year.
What is a chastity belt?	A labor-saving device.
What is the most common pregnancy craving?	For men to be the ones who get pregnant.
I normally wear a size 34-C bra. Now that I'm pregnant, should I continue to wear a bra?	Not if you don't mind switching in the future to a size 34-Long.
What is the most reliable method to determine a baby's sex?	Childbirth.
My blood type is type O-positive and my husband's is A-negative. What if my baby is born, say, type AB-positive?	Then the jig is up.
Should I have a baby after 35 (no need for unnecessary tests if you think you are healthy)?	No, 35 children is enough
My husband and I are very attractive. I'm sure our baby will be beautiful enough for commercials. Whom should I contact about this?	Your therapist.
I'm two months pregnant now. When will my baby move?	With any luck, right after he finishes college.
How would I know that my bag of waters	When you taste it and it is not

broke?	salty.
How will I know if my vomiting is morning sickness or the flu?	If it's the flu, you'll get better.
My brother tells me that since my husband has a big nose, and genes for big noses are dominant, my baby will have a big nose as well. Is this true?	The odds are greater that your brother will have a fat lip.
Does pregnancy affect a woman's memory?	I don't remember.
Since I became pregnant, my breasts, rear end, and even my feet have grown. Is there anything that gets smaller during pregnancy?	Yes, your bladder and your brain (latest research according to a CAT scan).
Ever since I've been pregnant, I haven't been able to go to bed at night without onion rings. Is this a normal craving?	Depends on what your doing with them.
The more pregnant I get, the more often strangers smile at me. Why?	A. Cause your fatter than they are.
My wife is five months pregnant and so moody that sometimes she's borderline irrational.	So what's your question?
Will I love my dog less when the baby is born?	No, but your husband might get on your nerves.
Under what circumstances can sex at the end of pregnancy (semen contains prostaglandin - hormone, which stimulate labor) bring on labor?	When the sex is between your husband and another woman.
What's the difference between a nine-months pregnant woman and a Playboy centerfold?	Nothing, if the pregnant woman's husband knows what's good for him.
What position should the baby be in during the ninth month of pregnancy?	Head down, pressing firmly on your bladder.
What's the best way to get a man to give up his seat to a pregnant woman?	Brute force.
When is the best time to get an epidural (drug injected to mom or added in the IV that depresses the baby and slows labor for some mothers)?	Right after you find out you are pregnant.
Is there any reason I have to be in the	Not unless the word "alimony"

delivery room while my wife is in labor?	means anything to you.
How long is the average woman in labor (it takes 10-30 minutes for some second-time mothers)?	Whatever she says, divided by two.
I'm modest. Once I'm in the hospital to deliver, who will see me in that delicate position?	Authorized personnel only---doctors, nurses, odorless, photographers, florists, cleaning crews, journalists, etc.
What does it mean when the baby's head is crowning (burning sensation in mom's puss signaling the baby's head is coming out)?	It means you feel as though not only a crown but the entire throne is trying to make it's way out of you.
What are forceps (metal that pulls baby out since mom can't push after she is given drugs for pain relief or other measures)?	Giant baby tweezers.
Does anyone in this country still give birth in the fields or in a van?	Not on purpose.
Is there anything I should avoid while recovering from childbirth?	Yes, pregnancy.
Does labor cause hemorrhoids?	Labor causes anything you want to blame it for.
Under what circumstances should a baby not be circumcised (baby's foreskin has about six functional nerves)?	When it's a girl, for starters.
Is there a safe alternative to breast pumps?	Yes, baby lips.
Why is standing the best position when delivering a breech baby (feet first)?	Gravity.
Why does it take some time to deliver a baby boy than a baby girl even when in squatting position?	Wider chest circumference for boys.
When would I know the day that true labor comes?	When your weight is about half a pound less.
What does it mean when a baby is born with teeth?	It means that the baby's mother may want to rethink her plans to nurse.
Why is nipple stimulation used to induce labor?	It releases the sex hormones which initiate labor.
How does one sanitize nipples?	Bathe daily and wear a clean bra.

	It beats boiling them in a saucepan.
What are the terrible twos (toddlers at age 2 yr. old)?	Your breasts after baby stops nursing cold turkey.
What is the best time to wean (stop) the baby from nursing?	When you see teeth marks or when dad wants mom's breast for himself only.
What is the grasp reflex (ability of newborn at birth to grasp things tightly)?	The reaction of new father's when he sees new mother's breasts.
Can a mother get pregnant while nursing?	Yes, but it's much easier if she removes the baby from her breast and puts him to sleep first.
Where is the best place to store breast milk?	In your breasts.
What happens to disposable diapers after they're thrown away?	They are stored in a silo in the Midwest, in the event of global chemical warfare.
Why should dim lights be used during homebirth?	Baby wants the same environment as much as possible as inside mom's belly.
Do I have to have a baby shower (party for mom before the baby arrives)?	Not if you change the baby's diaper very quickly.
Why did the newborn stopped crying during circumcision?	He lost the sense of trust around him after crying for pain and nobody cared.
What causes baby blues (mild postpartum depression after birth)?	Tanned, hard-bodied bimbos.
Nannies aren't cheap are they?	Not usually, but occasionally you'll find a floozy.
What is colic (baby crying intensely)?	A reminder for new parents to use birth control.
Why is mom lying on her back when in labor which counters gravity?	For doctor's convenience.
Why does it take a long time for baby to be delivered when mom is flat on the bed?	Baby has to climb a hill before coming out.
What are night terrors?	Frightening episodes in which the new mother dreams she's pregnant again.

Our baby was born last week. When will my wife begin to feel and act normal again?	When the kids are in college.
My childbirth instructor says it's not pain I'll feel during labor, but pressure (muscles and ligaments tightening up to push baby out). Is she right?	Yes, in the same way that a tornado might be called an air current.

When Membranes Rupture Prematurely (before 36 weeks)

Call your doctor or midwife. They will want to: document that your membranes have ruptured and that the baby's heart rate is okay and do a vaginal culture to rule out GBS or Bacterial Vaginosis, or another infection that could harm you and your baby. Mom should document baby's movement every two hours.

Maintain proper hygiene. It is critically important to avoid infection once the water sac around the baby has broken. That includes avoiding any digital exam as possible (checking the cervix using the gloved fingers).

Take Vitamin C and Echinacea tincture to strengthen the membranes containing amniotic fluid. This would be beneficial when you want the baby to stay longer in your womb and prevent premature labor.

Check temperature hourly and call the doctor or midwife when temperature is above normal (>99) and when accompanied by chills, fever or other sign of infection.

Do not take a bath but shower is ok. Sexual intercourse is avoided.

Get lots of walk, fresh air, and rest well for the coming labor needs lots of your energy.

See Also:

Labor

Birth [Plan](#)

Notes: Sometimes you do not need a birth plan. Selecting the doctor or midwife that you can communicate well is important. Remember that hospital protocols and personnel can influence the management of your birth. Be alert to sense when things are not going the way you expect things to happen. The best birth plans and management come with lots of preparation, education, and responsibilities.

Some mothers would present a detailed plan to their caregivers during one of their prenatal visits. The nursing staff do not need to know the details but communicate to them in a way that you can express concern while asking for some time before they perform the procedure or an explanation of risks and benefits.

It is best to use the birth plan as your own guidelines as communicated to your partner and your doula. While you are focusing on the birth, your partner and doula can be the advocate or communicator of your wishes. I would not personally present a written plan but I will try to show rapport and cooperation with the nursing staff. The birth plan listed below is for the doctor and not the nursing staff.

We are well prepared and educated for birth. We have done all we can to be healthy and low risk throughout this pregnancy. We have carefully selected each member of our birth team and respect their expert training, and also that of the staff at your hospital. In the light of our thorough preparation, we look forward to this birth being natural and peaceful and will welcome all assistance to that end. We do reserve the right to refuse any medical procedures or drugs which after careful consideration, do not seem appropriate, necessary, or beneficial for the safe and natural unmedicated birth of our child.

We recognize that labor is real work and can be quite lengthy. We expect to work with the contractions and experience all the associated sensations. We plan to walk about, change positions, utilize relaxation and gravity to facilitate its natural progression. We do not anticipate the need for any medications or procedures for labor augmentation or pain relief. We plan to use massage, warm compresses, and herbs for pain relief.

We request that all fetal heart tones be monitored manually and vaginal exams be done minimally when necessary. To minimize the risk of infection, exams should not be performed once the membranes have been ruptured.

As we have no prior history of complications, and plan to drink plenty of clear fluids throughout labor for hydration, we do not anticipate the need for any intravenous devices.

When the pushing stage begins, we plan to utilize upright positions

necessary to effectively work with the contractions. We have prepared the perineum for birth, and with proper support and massage, an episiotomy (by the doctor) should not be required. In the event of a tear, the repair may be performed using local anesthesia only after the cord has been cut.

We also recognize that pushing may require several hours. We are prepared to patiently work with the contractions rather than use vacuum extraction or other means solely for the purpose of speeding things up a bit. We request that the baby be lifted to the mother's breast for warming, bonding and sucking immediately following birth. It is our desire to discover for ourselves the baby's gender, rather than be informed by our attendants, after waiting so long for this delightful moment.

After the birth, and once the placenta has been naturally expelled by the mother, we wish for the father to cut the cord. We desire that the baby remain with the mother at all times to be warmed, suckled and bonded with. We request that all procedures and routines such as weighing, measuring, exams, eye drops (delayed for two hours), baths, etc., be done at bedside, or delayed until the mother can accompany the baby elsewhere in the hospital.

Thank you for your help and cooperation with our birth.

Parents of the new baby

See also:

Body Image and Weight Gain During Pregnancy

Weight Gain

Gain weight for the baby ([see Preterm birth](#)) by eating quality food. Remember mom needs all the energy later on so eat healthy. Eat small quantities if you like to control your weight but eat at least every two to three hours especially during the last trimester.

Talk to your midwife or doctor about your weight and eating habits. Maintaining a healthy diet leads to easy birth and healthy baby. Do avoid toxins from the environment, plastics, air/water pollution and many hidden toxins.

Avoid crustaceans, cat feces and pools. Do lots of walking but rest a lot too since many sales jobs that require 8 hours of standing predisposes pregnant women to early birth or premature birth in the absence of proper nutrition and prenatal.

Breastfeeding

Most mothers around the world agree that:

The mother's heartbeat is the baby's lullaby music.

The mother's breastmilk has sleep inducing benefits.

The mother's breast is not dropable like a bottle and is easy to carry around.

The mother's breast milk stores the baby's milk at just the right temperature.

The mother's breast milk is readily available any time the baby sucks or cries.

The mother's breast milk stays in a sterile place and stays warm.

The mother's breasts do not need sterilizing, boiling or cleaning with soap (for nipples).

The mother's breasts size does not matter since they always produce the right amount of milk for her baby.

The mother's breasts only absolutely need to be suckled by the baby.

The mother's breast milk makes traveling easy for both baby and mom.

The mother's breast appears pleasing in a natural way to dad's eyes when nursing the baby.

The mother's breast provides the comfort the baby needs when tired, hungry or sick.

The many benefits of breastmilk for mothers and babies include:

Phosphorous which is important for brain growth and development.

Antibodies that will protect the baby against invading organisms.

The effect of a natural vaccine without the risk of artificial vaccines.

Being always in the right formulation with the baby's age.

The absence of allergens.

Comforting the baby's stomach rather than disturbing it.

More iron and other nutrients that are readily absorbed by the baby.

We can tell our partners and friends why we breastfeed our babies. The following sentences reaffirm our commitment to breastfeed our babies:

Breastfeeding is the mother's gift only the mother can give.

Breastfeeding helps make more loving and caring children.

Breastfeeding is the most human form of feeding.

Breastfeeding makes it easier to discipline children.

Breastfeeding is nature's way of helping mom be in love with her baby.

Breastfeeding makes dad happy when seeing his wife and baby nourishing each other.

Breastfeeding helps remove mother's worries for the day.

Breastfeeding increases opportunity for the baby to be massaged by the mother.

Breastfeeding helps mom know her child's growth and developmental changes better.

Breastfeeding helps bring greater rewards for the future generation.

Right Start Breastfeeding Tips

Prepare your nipples, eat well, and sleep when your newborn is sleeping.

Maintain a healthy diet with four fresh vegetables and three kinds of fruits a day. Drink lots of water or juices. A hot soup or soupy dish rich in sea foods and grains is important.

Put your babies to your breast as soon after they are born as possible.

Seek the support of mothers who have breastfed their babies. If breast engorgement occurs: apply warm compress, soak your breast in warm water, make sure that the baby empties your breasts, and follow proper positioning and latching on as instructed by your midwife (see Breastfeeding problems).

Breastfeeding More than one Baby

If you have twins, you are doubly committed to the task of breastfeeding. Your partner is an important resource in giving you time to breastfeed both your babies at the same time or one at a time. Since most twins are premature and tend to be sleepy, not sucking well for the first couple of weeks, a lactation counselor or consultant can help you with the proper latch-on techniques. Get the right start breastfeeding tips before sore nipples or milk supply problems occur. Research has shown that mothers who breastfeed twins simultaneously have higher elevations of the mothering hormone prolactin than those who nurse one baby at a time.

Mother's needs: The needs of a mother are increased with each child to breastfeed so a recommended 3,000 cal/day and increased fluid intake are necessary to maintain the proper nutrition of the mother. Rest is important and support from family and friends can do a great deal in the success of breastfeeding twins or multiples.

Baby's needs: If one of the babies is less demanding, wake that baby up for simultaneous feeding with the hungrier baby during the day. Breastfeed him or her during the night to allow greater weight gain.

For Breastfeeding Positions for Twins, ask your midwife, breastfeeding consultant or childbirth educator (Authors):

Double clutch hold

Cross-cradle position

Parallel position: One baby is in the cradle hold and one is in the clutch hold with their bodies lying in the same direction.

The Family sleeping together helps the baby slowly adjust to his or her environment.

My second child shared bed with us until he was three years of age.

I can feel the contrasting differences between him and his brother who did not shared bed with us. He is so loving to me and we know each other's feelings. He was so attached to me that he cried when I left him and his brother for work abroad. Nurse, mother of two, Philippines

Sharing bed is an old tradition in the Far East. By necessity, a big family of six children shares bed usually on the floor with a mat. Until the children reach the age of about five or six years old.

See also:

Kegel Exercises

Learn to exercise the muscles in your perineum, a sling of muscles that provide support necessary during labor and birth. Tighten these muscles just as you would if you wished to stop the flow of your urine. You can do this anywhere and should be done regularly.

Another way to tone these muscles is through perineal massage where your two fingers or your partner's fingers massage the lower vaginal opening spreading it slowly and downward. Ask your midwife how this should be done.

See also:

Babies

My First Birth with Midwives Assisting

Baby Dominic was born at 6:04am on July 18, 1994. The night before was a Sunday, I decided not to attend 7 pm mass as usual, but to have my husband take me to visit our primary midwife, Saraswathi instead. We visited Saraswathi in Palo Alto at 8 PM. Sara's orders were to find iron supplements, go home, take a warm bath, eat a full meal, drink a glass of wine and go to bed. Later Saras called us at home and discovered we had not done all of those things yet. We had stopped at Country Sun natural foods store and found they didn't have the brand of chelated iron supplements Saras had recommended. There was difficulty finding a suitable substitute, but we finally found it. Then we decided to stop for take out food to bring home to save time.

I waited patiently in the car while my husband got the food and then finally we drove home. My patience was tried again while my husband scrubbed out the bath tub in preparation for my bath. Finally after the meal and the bath and the iron and the wine we got into the bed. But my labor had begun, this being between 10 and 11 PM.

I assumed a position of all fours on my knees on the bed. I began breathing, vocalization and visualization exercises. My husband made his best argument for granting him allowance to sleep but I rejected it. He voiced stubborn expressions of doubts and skepticism. I switched into "override husband" mode, told him to hush up and follow my instructions. The first thing was for him to apply pressure to my lower back. I leaked and we turned on the light to see what color the fluid was. We saw nothing and perhaps we should have realized that being clear it was my watery fluid - not urine. I began moaning and new contractions. At 1:30 am my contractions were lasting about thirty seconds. By 1:45 am they were lasting fifty-five seconds. By 1:50 am they were lasting about ninety seconds.

I was doing a lot of concentrating and listening to the messages from my body. Between 2 and 3 am I decided we should call Saraswathi and ask her to please come and attend. Saras promised to come over fully equipped and to bring her seven month old daughter Sophia.

She informs us that her friend Joanne, a nurse-midwife from Los Gatos, would also be coming to attend.

I remained at my favored all fours position on the bed and instructed my husband to continue hand pressure on my lower back. I visit the toilet, nothing comes out but I vomit up all my supper. We made a second call to Saraswathi because during the first Saras instructed my husband to follow my wishes and to call back if I seemed to be growing delirious with the intensifying level of pain. Saras recommended a heating pad to my lower back but we only had a hot water bottle handy. Saras said to use this as a

compress and to call her right back if my situation intensified.

I took at least three separate showers to lessen the pain as Yelena, one of the midwife partners of Saras, had advised in our childbirth preparation class. My husband was trying to fight off waves of sleep and sleep deprivation pangs. I found some pain relief by sitting on the toilet. I complained numerous times of feeling as if I had to go but nothing would come out. My husband gave his speech that maybe I should have drank prune juice blah blah blah. I told him to hush up and come back to holding the hot compress on my lower back while I was on all fours up on the bed. Then at one decisive moment I asked him to call Saras again and ask her to please come right over. Saras responded and soon arrived with baby Sophia and Joanne around 4 am.

As my labor continued, Saras and Joanne started getting things set up. Baby Sophia was placed in the second bedroom with the door closed. I was accomplishing advanced vocalizations and visualization backed up with serious continuous prayer. Saras urged me to mind my breathing to keep better focus and concentration.

Joanne and Saras had various items positioned around the bedroom. We had most of the recommended things on hand, but half of them were in the second bedroom. We were insufficiently prepared to the extent that we had assumed that the delivery was still a week or two off. I was still working in the office that Friday. Later we discovered there was hardly any gas in the tank of our Subaru. There were numerous failures of supporting equipment. The oxygen tank the midwives brought had accidentally leaked, which Joanne noticed and fixed. The flashlights we readied did not operate dependably and at one point my husband had to hold up a table lamp to illuminate me for the midwives. The midwives couldn't find the desired size needle to sew stitches for me. These minor screw-ups were barely noticeable to me, for I was concentrating fully on my laboring. Using all my knowledge and will power I ignored the side events and focused on the main event. I was imagining that my body is opening up. I was seeing beautiful faces of babies with angel-like smiles, mothers holding their babies and nursing them, my baby trying to squeeze out of my birth canal. I was focusing on my breathing for I was aware that my baby was breathing through my breathing.

Saras announced that we would have our baby born within 24 hours and this really woke my husband up! He used all his ability to compress my lower back as I instructed him. My moaning became louder and louder. I was amazed days later when the neighbors claimed they didn't hear anything unusual. I focused on my vocalizations to help my vagina open as fast as I could. I used all the octaves, high, low and in-between. At one point baby Sophia woke up and Saras brought her into the room with us. I appreciated baby Sophia's presence and gained spirit by watching her smile at us from the corner.

Finally my pushing became more and more perfect. While keeping pressure on my lower back, my husband could lean back and see the first image of a tip of a hairy head trying to press out of my vagina. At first just a little sliver of hairy head was visible as the midwives called his attention to it. He could see a little portion of hairy baby head emerge far outside only to disappear back inside my body.

My steady progress was unabated and undeniable. I was incredibly determined to succeed and successfully fought back second thoughts. I know that fear would halt the progress of my labor. I summoned all my will power and my faith that all mothers were designed to labor and birth using the wisdom of their bodies. The stage was there all set for me but I also wondered if it really was possible for my body to withstand the pain and accomplish the birth. I can hear the nurse midwives guiding and coaching me with their suggestions and praises.

The midwives decided to maneuver me off the bed and try for a better position. They had my husband sit in an upright hard-backed chair and I assumed my most comfortable standing squatting position while leaning my back toward my husband. He held me up as I dug my elbows and forearms into his lap. With four pushes, Saras handed the baby to my arms. And as I feel the baby's bottom I shouted 'His a boy.' I shouted ' I love you baby' many times, reassuring my baby that he is welcomed with joy and warmth and that mommy is nearby. My midwife told me to push my placenta out and I did and then she told me to tell my body to stop the bleeding which I did.

My husband was so awestruck that I had to repeat Saras instructions to him that he should cut the cord and so he did. The midwives had wasted no time in presenting our baby in the right position for him to snip the beautiful blue cord with sharp scissors.

I was hugging the baby, looking at his dark eyes and we were communicating to each other without words. I remember I shed a cupful of tears, for it reminded me of the labor for all the mothers in the world and most especially my mother whom I love. My husband felt the joy in my cries and I noticed tears were also flowing from his eyes. He climbed onto the bed on his belly and reached for the baby and me.

My husband and I agreed later that the successful homebirth of our precious baby Dominic was the greatest thing that had ever happened to either of us. The morning baby Dominic was born his father and I basked in the joy and wonder of his arrival. We were filled with respect and gratitude for Saras and Joanne. By 10:00 am, shortly thereafter the midwives and Sophia all left and only my husband, baby Dominc and I were left. There we lay on our bed in peace and joy, despite our exhaustion. Seemingly for hours we simply stared in loving admiration at our newborn baby.

Herbs and Nutrition

Eat for You and for Your Baby

Your baby is nourished by your body as the plant obtains nourishment from the soil. A healthy baby is the result of a healthy mother. It is good to know which of the foods that we take contribute to a healthy baby. Most herbs listed here (except for the red raspberry) should be taken during the last trimester and only after consultation first with your midwife or doctor.

Carbohydrates

Vitamin A

Vitamin B1

Vitamin B5

Vitamin D

Choline

Herbs to stimulate labor

Protein

Calcium

Vitamin B2

Vitamin B12

Vitamin E

Herbs for Cleaning

Herbs to stop hemorrhage

Fats

Iron

Vitamin B3

Vitamin C

Biotin

Herbs for easing labor pains

Herbs for Preventing Pre-eclampsia

Vitamins

Iodine

Manganese

Selenium

General Toner Herbs

Herbs to expel placenta

Minerals

Magnesium

Potassium

Zinc

Herbal Resource List

Herbs to relax

Carbohydrates

Each gram of carbohydrates provides the body with four calories. Most foods containing carbohydrates have other essential nutrients such as honey and blackstrap molasses which also contain iron and B vitamins. Grains, fruits and vegetables contain carbohydrates which provide fuel and energy for the body. Pregnant mothers need about 2,200 calories per day while nursing mothers need these and an additional of about 800 calories per day.

Proteins

Many a pregnancy induced hypertension could be avoided by taking an adequate amount of protein. About 90 grams of protein is needed by a pregnant mother for the growth and maintenance of body tissues of the baby and the mother. Complete protein foods are found in meat, fish, eggs, milk and cheese while incomplete protein foods are found in legumes, grains, seeds and nuts. Some sources of protein include: meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk, nuts, beans, peas. Some combinations of proteins providing the complete protein that the body needs are:

rice and legumes

rice and legumes and wheat

wheat, sesame and soybean

corn and legumes

rice and milk or wheat

peanuts and milk

wheat and legumes

wheat and cheese

wheat and milk

Fats

Your fat intake should be about 35% of your total calories. Each gram of fat provides the body with nine calories. Fat is important in maintaining body heat especially in cold climates. It aids in the absorption and utilization of carotene, the vegetable form of Vitamin A.

Vitamins

Vitamin A is essential for good vision. It helps reduce susceptibility to infection. It is essential for healthy skin, good blood, strong bones and teeth, kidneys, bladder, lungs, and membranes. Natural Sources: Fish liver oils, sheep and beef liver, carrots, yams, dairy products, liver, dark green and yellow leafy vegetables.

Beta Carotene provides the body with a safe source of Vitamin A. It works with other natural protectors to defend your cells from harmful free radical damage. Natural Sources: Dark green leafy vegetables, yellow and orange vegetables and fruits.

Vitamin B-1 (Thiamine) aids in digestion. It is necessary for metabolism of sugar and starch to provide energy. It maintains a healthy nervous system. Alcohol can cause deficiencies of this vitamin and all the B-complex vitamins. Natural Sources: Brewer's Yeast, wheat germ, liver, whole-grain cereals, fish and poultry, egg yolks, nuts, legumes, brown rice, and blackstrap molasses.

Vitamin B-2 (Riboflavin) helps the body obtain energy from protein, carbohydrates and fats. It helps maintain good vision and healthy skin. Natural Sources: brewer's yeast, alfalfa, almonds, liver and other organ meats, leafy vegetables, whole-grain breads and milk.

Vitamin B-3 (Niacin) helps the body utilize protein, fats and carbohydrates. It is necessary for healthy nervous system and digestive system. Natural Sources: lean meats, poultry, fish, peanuts, milk and milk products, and rice bran.

Vitamin B-5 (Pantothenic Acid) helps release energy from protein, carbohydrates and fats. It is needed to support a variety of body functions, including the maintenance of a healthy digestive system. Sources: royal jelly, brewer's yeast, brown rice, organ meats, salmon, egg yolks, legumes, wheat germ.

Vitamin B-6 (Pyridoxine) is essential for the body's utilization of protein. It is needed for the production of red blood cells, nerve tissue and antibodies. Women taking oral contraceptives have lower levels of Vitamin B-6. Drinking alcohol also lowers the level of B-6 in the body. Natural Sources: brewer's yeast, meats, whole grains/wheat, bananas, green leafy vegetables, liver, brown rice, soybeans, rye, and lentils.

Vitamin B-12 (Cyanocobalamin) is necessary for the normal development of red blood cells, and the functioning of cells, particularly in the bone marrow, nervous system and intestines. Natural Sources: meat, sardines, mackerel, dairy products and fermented soy products.

Biotin is important in the metabolism of fats, carbohydrates and proteins. Natural Sources: liver, brewer's yeast, eggs, sardines, legumes, brown rice and whole-grain cereals.

Vitamin C is necessary to produce collagen, the connective material of all body tissues. It is important for healthy teeth and gums. It strengthens capillaries and other blood vessels. It plays an important role in healing injuries. It aids the body's absorption of iron. It helps fight infection and it is important in boosting the immune system. Taken by mothers with breast engorgement, mastitis, or any time the body feels weak.

Vitamin C is water soluble so it cannot be stored by your body and must be frequently replaced. Stress decreases your body's supply of Vitamin C. Clinical tests have shown that smokers and women taking birth control pills have significantly lower blood levels of

Vitamin C than non-smokers and women who are not taking birth control pills. Natural Sources: Citrus fruits and juices, acerola cherries, cantaloupe, broccoli, alfalfa sprouts, tomatoes, green and red peppers, and strawberries.

Choline is an element found in lecithin which is considered important in the transmission of nerve impulses. Natural Sources: lecithin, egg yolks, liver, wheat germ, Brewer's yeast.

Vitamin D is necessary in the absorption of calcium and phosphorous which are required for bone formation. It is also necessary in maintaining a stable nervous system and normal heart function. Take a nice walk and get fresh, clean air daily. Other sources: sardines, salmon, tuna, egg yolk, sunflower seeds.

Vitamin E protects fat soluble vitamins and red blood cells. It is essential in cellular respiration and protection. It inhibits coagulation of blood by preventing clots. Sources: wheat germ, safflower nuts, sunflower seeds, whole wheat.

Minerals

Calcium is the most abundant mineral in the body. It is essential for the formation and repair of bone and teeth. It regulates certain body processes such as normal behavior of nerves, muscle tone and blood clotting. Natural Sources: Milk and milk products, fish and other seafoods, green leafy vegetables, citrus fruits, dried peas and beans. About 800 mg per day are required for a pregnant mother. The following table lists the food sources and amount of calcium in each food.

Food: 200 mg = 3/4 cup baby cereal 185 mg = 1 cup cream of wheat
50 mg = 2 eggs

Fish: 150 mg = 3.5 oz. Canned herring 250 mg = 3.5 oz. Canned mackerel 200 mg = 3.5 oz. Canned salmon with bones 100 mg = 3.5 oz. oysters 350 mg = 3.5 oz. sardines with bones

Cooked Beans: 50 mg = 1/2 cup white 50 mg = 1/2 cup red
40 mg = 1/2 cup limas 75 mg = 1/2 cup soybeans 50 mg = 1/2 cup garbanzos 25 mg = 1/2 cup lentils

Greens: 120 mg = 1/2 cup beet greens 90 mg = 2/3 cup broccoli
60 mg = 1/2 cup chard 150 mg = 1/2 cup collards
90 mg = 1/2 cup kale 140 mg = 1/2 cup mustard greens

Dried fruits: 100 mg = 4 figs 100 mg = 8 prunes
50 mg = 1/2 cup raisins 100 mg = 1 large orange

Nuts: 125 mg = 1/3 cup almond, unblanched 200 mg = 1/3 cup brazil nuts
50 mg = 1/4 cup peanuts with skin 50 mg = 1/4 cup peanut butter
50 mg = 1/2 cup English walnuts

Herbs rich in calcium: amaranth, kelp, parsley

Chromium acts with insulin to enable the body to utilize glucose, the form in which the body utilizes carbohydrates. Natural Sources: Thyme, black pepper, Brewer's yeast, liver, whole wheat and whole-grain cereals.

Copper is active in the storage and release of iron to form hemoglobin for red blood cells. Natural Sources: Organ meats, shellfish, nuts and dried legumes.

Iron

Iron is an essential part of hemoglobin, a protein structure which helps the red blood cells to carry oxygen throughout the body. Iron is important for maintaining blood volumes. About 40 mg per day are required for a pregnant mother. Mother's wisdom tells us to consume three to five times a day of greens, fruits, nuts, and other healthy food during pregnancy. Mothers before us have prepared well during pregnancy thru proper nutrition.

Pregnant moms should consume more iron to compensate for the expansion of plasma volume during the last trimester which leads to decline in the hemoglobin and hematocrit

values in the blood. Iron is important in providing oxygenation for mother and baby. It can mean less bleeding after birth and a healthy baby with no breathing-related problems.

Holistic midwives suggest an iron tonic of yellow dock root made into a tea sweetened with honey. A hot morning drink containing blackstrap molasses sweetened with honey can be a good substitute for coffee drinkers. Cooking in cast iron pans can help in iron absorption.

When cooking try to combined one or two kinds of food with vitamin C-rich food. Nothing beats organic or pesticide-free produce from the farmer's market and also avoid eating canned or processed foods heavily laden with carcinogens or chemical preservatives. Whole-grain foods such as whole wheat flour/bread, brown sugar, unprocessed grains - rolled oats, bulgar wheat, brown rice - contain twenty more nutrients than refined flour.

Though absorption of iron in meats is greater than in veggies, vegan moms can still get the necessary amount of iron by eating a wide variety of iron-rich foods.

Iron is important for maintaining blood volumes. About 60 mg of iron per day are required for a pregnant mother due to higher blood volume and the demands of fetus and placenta. The following table lists the food sources and amount of iron in each food.

Sources: 1.3 mg = 1 cup of raw bean sprouts 3.1 mg = 1 tbsp blackstrap molasses 1.1 mg = 2/3 cup broccoli greens 2.5 mg = 3 oz canned sardines 7.5 mg = 3 oz beef liver, sauteed 5.2 mg = 3 oz clams, oysters, other seafoods 2.0 mg = 3 oz chicken 2.8 mg = 1 medium potato baked with skin 1.4 mg = 1 tbsp brewer's yeast 1.0 mg = 1 egg
Dried fruits/juices/nuts: 5.1 mg = 10-12 halves apricots
5.1 mg = 10-12 halves peaches 10.5 mg = 8 oz prune juice
5.6 mg = 1 cup raisins 3.8 mg = 3 .5 oz cashew nuts
5.0 mg = 3.5 oz chocolate bittersweet

Cooked Beans/Nuts: 2.1 mg = 1 cup walnuts 13.8 mg = 1 cup red
15.6 mg = 1 cup limas 16.8 mg = 1 cup soybeans
13.8 mg = 1 cup garbanzos 13.6 mg = 1 cup lentils
6.8 mg = 1 cup peanuts roasted with skin
6.4 mg = 1 cup peanuts roasted without skin 15.6 mg = 1 cup white beans
15.4 mg = 1 cup mung beans 10.2 mg = 1 cup common peas
22.4 mg = 1 cup pumpkin and squash kernels
14.2 mg = 1 cup sunflower seed kernels 2.0 mg = 1/2 cup barley
1.5 mg = 1/2 cup kidney

Others: 1.9 mg = 2/3 cup beet greens kelp caviar, buckwheat, oats, hazelnuts, wheat germ

Herbs for anemia: alfalfa, clover, dandelion, red raspberry

Note: Oregano inhibits iron absorption.

Folic Acid is used in red blood cell formation. It aids in metabolism of proteins and is necessary for growth and division of body cells. It is an essential vitamin for pregnant women, and deficiencies have been linked with birth defects. Spina Bifida and Anecephaly are two Neural Tube Defects that appear to be preventable with just 400 mcg of folic acid. Folic Acid is considered brain food, and is needed for energy production and the formation of red blood cells. It functions as a co-enzyme in DNA and RNA synthesis. It is important for healthy cell division and replication. In pregnancy it helps regulate embryonic and fetal nerve cells formation, which is vital for normal development. To be effective in prevention, this nutrient must begin before conception, and continue well into the pregnancy. Folic acid works best when combined with Vitamins B12 and C. Good sources are: brewer's yeast, alfalfa, endive, chickpeas, oats, enriched cereals, fruits and fruit juices, leafy green vegetables, barley, beef, bran, brown rice, cheese, liver, milk, mushrooms, salmon, tuna, wheat germ, whole grains, and whole wheat.

Iodine sources: Kelp, cod liver oil

Magnesium helps in the absorption and use of calcium and phosphorous. It aids in bone growth and is necessary for proper functioning of nerves and muscles. Natural Sources: Green vegetables, seeds, nuts and whole grains.

Manganese is needed for normal tendon and bone structure. Natural Sources: bran, cloves, ginger, buckwheat, oats, hazelnuts, chestnuts, tea leaves, peas and beans.

Potassium is a mineral found in the cell fluid throughout the body. It helps regulate your body's water balance. It is necessary for normal growth and muscle function. Natural Sources: Green leafy vegetables, oranges, whole grains, potatoes (with skin), broccolie, avocado, brussels sprouts, cauliflower, cantaloupes, dates, prunes and bananas.

Selenium works with Vitamin E. Natural Sources: bran, broccoli, onions, tomatoes, tuna, corn, cabbage, whole wheat, beans and wheat germ.

Zinc is essential for growth, tissue repair and sexual development. Sources: herring, sesame seeds

More about Herbs

General Toner Herbs: Red raspberry, squaw vine, crampbark, wild yam (not to be taken during the first and second trimester because of the possibility of fetal masculinization)

Pre-eclampsia or Pregnancy-induced Hypertension Herbal Helpers: alfalfa, dandelion, peppermint, parsley

Labor Herbal Helpers

Note: Most labor herbal helpers should not be used during pregnancy except during labor.

To cleanse the birthing place: cedar, sweetgrass, sage, lavender, rosemary

To ease labor pains: squaw vine, *blue cohosh (not to be used with women with heart disease), bethroot (or birthroot is used by the Native Americans to reduce postpartum bleeding), lavender essential oil (causes anticonvulsant activity and sedative effects), bay laurel, lemon balm, celery, valerian essential oil (aromatherapy for its sedative effect), wild yam

*Note: Blue Cohosh is an agent to induce labor. It contains glycoside which stimulates smooth muscle in the uterus. It is not to be used in clients with heart disease.

To stimulate labor or increase contractions: blue cohosh, penny royal oil, rue, tansy, skullcap, motherwort, angelica

To relax labor or decrease contractions: lobelia, celery, valerian, chamomile, lemon balm

To expel placenta: angelica, penny royal, chamomile, basil, licorice (contains oxytocin), blue cohosh

To stop hemorrhage: cayenne, shepperd's purse, motherwort, blue cohosh, bethroot, angelica, licorice, comfrey, saffron

Store Up Energy for Birth

Mothers can take a pointer from the way runners prepare for a marathon to ease birth. Load up certain foods so you will store up needed energy for delivery:

Eat meals rich in complex carbohydrates such as pasta.

Take in more potassium (figs, bananas, legumes, lean meat) to help release energy from protein, fats, and carbohydrates.

Have extra helpings of citrus fruit and juice and iron-rich foods.

During delivery, you will lose a certain amount of Vitamin C, which is needed for the healing process after birth. Iron will give you the needed strength.

What to avoid?

Preservatives such as nitrates, Red 40, BHA, BHT etc.

Caffeine, alcohol, too much salt and refined sugar

White flour

Your needs and expectations

Having a baby is a profound passage in a woman's life. As an expectant mother you are endowed with the power to bear a child and participate in the creation of a new life. Together with your partner, you will traverse a most satisfying event as you master the birthing of a new life. Pregnancy allows you to examine the world around you more closely.

Take care of yourself

You are now more sensitive to the things around you as you are entering a sacred life experience. With empowerment and joyful feelings, you can surrender to the work of creation. This birth is special for you.

See also:

Homebirth

Discomforts

Mother's Love

Reference:

Complimentary and Alternative Medicines - Charles Feltrow, PharmD and Juan Avila, PharmD. It is available from Springhouse Corporation, 1111 Bethlehem Pike, P.O. Box 908, Springhouse, PA 19477.

Encyclopedia of Natural Medicine by Michael Murray

Prescriptions for Natural Healing by James Balch.

March of Dimes

<http://www.modimes.org/Programs2/FolicAcid/Default.htm>

Herbal Agents Resource List

American Botanical Council

<http://www.herbs.org>

APRALERT

<http://www.pmmp.uic.edu>

The Australasian College of Herbal Studies

<http://www.achs@herbed.com>

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov>

Lloyd Library

<http://www.libraries.uc.edu/lloyd>

Office of Dietary Supplements National Institute of Health

<http://www.odp.od.nih.gov>

Office of Alternative Medicine

<http://www.altmed.od.nih.gov>

US Food and Drug Administration

<http://www.fda.gov>

US National Library of Medicine

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov>

Imagine a Mother

Imagine a mother who believes it is blessed to be pregnant. A mother who feels the divine work of love in her womb. A mother who is conscious of choices about her pregnancy. A mother who nurtures the life inside her body with natural nourishment for body and soul. A mother who listens to the wisdom of her body and senses all the life force inside her womb.

Imagine a mother who believes she is designed to give birth. A mother who trusts and respects her body. Who listens to her needs, urges to push or bear down the coming baby. A mother who meets these bodily changes and life force with courage and wisdom.

Imagine a mother who has acknowledged the wisdom of mothers before her. A mother who has lived through the past. Who has healed into the present.

Imagine a mother who decides her own labor and birth. A mother who trusts in her ability to give birth. Who refuses to surrender her body and baby to unnecessary medical interventions.

Imagine a mother who knows where to birth her baby. A mother who is not subjected to fear of childbirth but empowered by the life giving force it brings. A mother who seeks other mothers and her partner for support. A mother who takes care of her body and her baby's nutrition. A mother who believes in the successful work of nature. A mother who bonds with her child from conception onwards. A mother who grows in love as she carries the life within her to the world.

See Also:

Discomforts

Kegel Exercises