



## Ten Tips for a Normal Birth from Lamaze International

1. Choose a place to birth where you're most comfortable and that supports normal birth. This may be at home, in a birth center, or hospital.
2. Choose a healthcare provider who supports the six care practices that promote normal birth. Many women have found the care provided by midwives to include less interventions and more labor support.
3. Don't request or agree to induction of labor unless there's a medical indication. Allowing your body to go into labor on its own is usually the best sign that your baby is ready to be born. Allow your labor to find its own pace and rhythm. Don't focus on the clock and don't use Pitocin to speed up your labor without medical indication.
4. Plan to move around freely during labor. You'll be more comfortable, your labor will progress more quickly, and your baby will move through the birth canal more easily if you stay upright and respond to the pain of your labor by changing positions. Try rocking, straddling a chair, lunging, walking, and slow dancing.
5. Think carefully about who you want to give you support during labor and birth. Consider hiring a doula or other professional labor support person to give you, your partner, and any other support person who's with you, continuous emotional and physical support.
6. Ask that your baby's heartbeat be monitored intermittently instead of all the time so that belts, cords, or wires do not tie you to a machine or specific place.

***The mission of Lamaze International is to promote, support, and protect normal birth through education and advocacy. These evidence-based practices adapted from the World Health Organization promote normal birth:***

- 1) *Labor begins on its own*
- 2) *Freedom of movement throughout labor*
- 3) *Continuous labor support*
- 4) *No routine interventions*
- 5) *Non-supine (e.g. upright or side-lying) positions for birth*
- 6) *No separation of mother and baby after birth*

7. Eat and drink as your body tells you to. Drinking plenty of fluids during labor will keep you from getting dehydrated and give you energy.
8. Use nonpharmacologic pain management strategies. For many women, warm baths and showers give powerful pain relief.

Practice using birth balls, massage, hot and cold packs, aromatherapy, focused breathing, and other comfort measures learned in Lamaze childbirth classes.

9. Don't give birth on your back! Upright (e.g. sitting, squatting, or standing), all-fours, or side-lying positions are more comfortable for you, increase the effectiveness of your contractions, and enable you to work with gravity. Push when your body tells you to and ask that support persons give only quiet encouragement. "Cheerleading" or counting is not recommended so that you can work with your body's own cues and rhythm.
10. Keep your baby with you after birth. Skin-to-skin contact keeps your baby warm and helps to regulate your baby's heartbeat and breathing. Keeping the baby with you in your room helps you to get to know your baby, respond to your baby's early feeding cues, and get breastfeeding off to a good start.

*If problems arise, ask questions about the risks and the benefits of any recommended interventions. Understand that sometimes labor and birth don't go as expected. If you're involved with decisions about your care and have good labor support, you're more likely to be satisfied with your birth even if medical interventions are needed.*