

Labor Coach: Comfort Measures During Labor

Below is a reminder list of suggestions for ways that the labor coach can help during labor. You can help by minimizing distractions. Take control of the environment. Dim the lights, close the door and play favorite music. Stay with your partner and talk with her. As the coach, be prepared. Wear comfortable clothes and take care of yourself.

Emotional Support

Stay calm, and remember not to take things personally. Be positive and supportive. Always keep her informed as to how well she is doing.

Body Positions and Comfort Measures

Try different labor positions: Standing and leaning, walking, birthing ball, hands and knees, sitting-up, side-lying, semi-sitting, rocking and swaying, squatting and supported squat. Position pillows around her. Remind her to change position frequently, moisten her lips and remind her to empty her bladder.

Patterned Breathing

Breathe with her and help her to stay relaxed between contractions. Help with breathing patterns: cleansing breath, slow chest breathing (in two three four, out two three four), transition (hee-hee-hee-hoo), feather or pant blow.

Hydrotherapy

Help her use the bath, whirlpool, or shower.

Hydration

Stay hydrated with ice chips, popsicles, water or juices.

Massage and Tension Release

Massage tense areas: brow, shoulders back, hands, feet. Acupressure, hand and foot effleurage (light stroking), aromatherapy lotion, touch relaxation, pressure point massage may help.

Attention-focusing and Mental Activity

Choose favorite music in the background. Help her relax between contractions. Help her focus during contractions. Use a focal point. Help her visualize something pleasant between contractions.

Hot and Cold Packs

Try warm blankets around the shoulders, lower back, legs and feet. Offer cold compresses to the forehead. Try an ice pack to the lower abdomen or lower back areas.

Environment

Soft lighting and appropriate temperature. "Crowd" control is important. Update family and friends but don't overwhelm the mom. Limit the number of people in the room to the ones she really wants to be there.

Back Pain Measures

Counter-pressure, double hip squeeze, hands and knees, pelvic rocking, walking, shower or bath.

Pushing

Spontaneous (with urge), open-glottis (slow exhale with bearing down)

Birth Partner Support

Suggestions and verbal reminders, encouragement and praise, patience and confidence, immediate response, undivided attention, eye contact, expressions of love

Adapted from Penny Simkin