

# Prenatal Education

## Key Messages for Ontario



### Labour Support

#### Key Messages

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**Having a support person or a group of support people with you during your labour and birth can make it easier and more enjoyable.**

A support person can provide emotional support and practical help during your labour. Women who have a support person during their labour and birth often:

- ▶ Cope better with labour pain.
- ▶ Use pain medications less often.
- ▶ Need less medical interventions.
- ▶ Have a shorter labour.
- ▶ See labour and birth as a positive experience.

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**Choose support people who you trust, make you feel comfortable, and who will be able to encourage you and advocate for you during labour.**

A support person is usually someone other than a health care provider who knows you personally. A support person can be any of the following people:

- ▶ Your partner.
- ▶ A relative.
- ▶ A friend.
- ▶ A doula or other professional labour support person.

You may choose to have just one support person or you may choose to have several support people. Be clear with your family and friends who you would like to be present during your labour and birth. Let others know when they can visit after your baby is born. If you plan to give birth at a hospital or a birthing centre, learn about their labour support and visiting policies.

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**Do what makes you feel comfortable during labour.**

There are many different options to help you cope with labour pain. Before labour, it can be helpful to review and even practice some these comfort measures to learn what may work best for you. During labour, do what makes you feel most comfortable.

Some comfort measures that may help during labour are:

- ▶ Walking.
- ▶ Changing positions.
- ▶ Using a birthing ball.
- ▶ Using a shower or bathtub.
- ▶ Having someone massage your back, hands, feet, or other parts of your body.
- ▶ Distraction activities such as watching television, reading, or surfing the internet.
- ▶ Listening to music.
- ▶ Meditation or visualization techniques.
- ▶ Breathing exercises.
- ▶ Sterile water injections done by your health care provider.
- ▶ Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS). This may require the purchase or the rental of the device in advance.

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### **Ask questions to help you make informed choices.**

Your health care provider might discuss information that you do not fully understand during labour and birth. Ask questions until you understand. This may ease any anxieties that you, your partner, and/or other support people might have. It will help you make informed decisions that are best for you and your baby. For more information about making informed choices, see the Interventions in Labour Key Messages.

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### **Partners and other support people need to take care of their physical and emotional needs.**

It can be helpful if your partner and/or other support people learn about labour and understand what you want for your labour and birth to be able to support you.

Labour can be long. It is important that your partner and other support people take care of themselves so that they can continue to support you. They need to keep hydrated, eat healthy food, and rest. If your partner is your only support person, you may consider having a relief person to fill in for short periods of time.

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### **Learn more about labour support.**

You can find out more about ways to cope with labour from the following resources.

- ▶ Your health care provider
- ▶ Your local public health unit 1-866-532-3161
- ▶ oMama  
www.omama.com