

## **Helping Your Partner Through Labor**

It's fairly common to feel unsure about what you're supposed to do during the delivery. Although you and your partner may have taken childbirth classes before your baby is actually born, it still may help to have a "cheat sheet" just for coaches.

### **Stage I: Phase 1 – Early Labor**

- Remain calm and have confidence in yourself. Your presence and companionship are a very important contribution.
- A few words of encouragement go a long way.
- Know the route to the hospital. Have her bag packed and ready. *Drive carefully!* Remind her to relax and breathe.
- If you need to leave for any length of time, do it during this early phase of labor.

### **Stage I: Phase 2 – Active Labor**

- Coach and encourage mom frequently. Avoid asking questions during contractions because each contraction will demand her deep concentration.
- A quiet environment will aid her ability to relax. Avoid bright lights and excessive chatter. It may help to keep visitors to a minimum.
- Positioning is important to her comfort and ability to relax. Suggest frequent position changes. Help her by adjusting pillows or assisting with movement.
- Mom may appreciate a cool compress to the face or a firm pressure massage to her lower back. (Remember to ask her first!)
- "You're doing great!" "Good job!" "Keep it up!" Sincere compliments like these cannot be heard often enough. Watch the monitor and keep her posted on progress with comments like, "Your contraction is at its peak and on it's on its way down."
- Help her with controlled breathing. Remind her to keep her concentration.
- Check her relaxation between contractions. Make sure she's really relaxing and conserving her energy.

### **Stage I: Phase 3 – Transition**

- Moms often need firm direction as to what to do during a contraction at this stage. Give suggestions firmly but kindly.
- Help her to focus on one contraction at a time.

- If she dozes between contractions, watch the monitor and wake her up as the contraction begins. This allows her to establish her breathing before the peak of the contraction, instead of waking up in the middle of it. Many laboring mothers also appreciate being told when the peak of the contraction is occurring or is over, so that they know when they're through the hardest part of the contraction.
- If allowed, offer her small ice chips to help relieve the dry mouth caused by controlled breathing.
- Have her visually and mentally focus on one item in the room.
- It's important to realize that any expressions of irritability are normal during the transition stage, and are not directed at you personally. Laboring mothers are not always agreeable.

### **Stage II: Pushing Through Delivery**

- Help her to get into position. Support her head. Urge her to keep her bottom relaxed. Try for *two* cleansing breaths at the beginning and end of each contraction.
- Keep her informed of her progress. Encourage her to keep pushing as hard as she can.
- It may be necessary to repeat the provider's instructions to her.
- If there are no problems with mom or baby you should be able to cut the cord — just let your healthcare team know if you would like to.

### **Stage III: Delivery of the Placenta**

- This is usually much easier than the baby's delivery and takes only a small push.
- Congratulate mom on a job well done!