



Early Labour

Sometimes when contractions first start, moms really concentrate on them, even if they are very far apart or short. This may be out of excitement (*Ohmigosh! This is really it! I can't wait to see this baby!*), or out of fear (*Yikes--that hurt! How much worse is it going to get? Can I really handle this?*). Other times, moms aren't sure if they're in labour or just having more practice contractions, which can also make them really focus on each contraction. Whether you're excited, nervous, unsure, or some combination of them all, the best thing to do is **ignore your labour as long as you can**.

Paying attention to your contractions won't make the baby come sooner, make it less painful, or convince you that this really is 'it'; all it will do is make your labour seem longer, waste a lot of energy and tire you out long before the hard work has even begun.. As well, if you use up all your pain-coping techniques on mild contractions, they won't work for you once you really need them.

Some strategies for ignoring your labour are:

- Convince yourself you are experiencing practice labour
- Go to sleep – especially if it is the middle of the night.
- Eat and drink to keep your energy up.
- Get some rest—you could easily be up all night!!
- Start your labour project. A good labour project keeps your hands busy but isn't too mentally challenging. Some examples of labour projects are: baking a lasagna to freeze, baking cookies, sorting baby clothes, crafts, finally getting your photos in order, or any other task you've been putting off.
- Did we mention get some sleep???

If it is the middle of the night, and you aren't in full active labour, the **ONLY** thing you should be doing is sleeping and resting. This will not be the best sleep of your life, but the rest you can get now will serve you very well down the road.

Tips for sleeping in early labour:

- Some Gravol or wine will take the edge off and help you doze in between contractions.
- Take a warm bath in a dim bathroom, breathe deeply and try and get into as trance-like a state as possible. Then get out, don't talk to anyone, dry off and slide into bed.
- A warm pack on your lower belly can help.
- Warm milk or calming tea can help.
- Frustration is your worst enemy. Try and stay relaxed and be grateful for whatever rest you can get—even if it isn't perfect.
- If you can't sleep, stay in bed and breathe deeply and visualize your baby in her little nest and focus on sending calming energy to her. Visualize your smooth birth. Pray, meditate, or breathe deeply. Rest is nearly as good as sleep and is **WAY** better than being up all night.

Eventually these distractions won't work anymore, and you will **know** you are in labour. The rhythm of labour will encourage a trance-like state that will require you to go deep inside yourself. You will need to concentrate on relaxing your body and mind during and after the contractions. Begin to time the contractions while you focus on breath, visualization, massage, and words of encouragement from your labour support.