



# Preparing for an Intact Perineum

1. Eat well. Poorly nourished tissues are more inclined to give way, whereas well-nourished tissues are more likely to be strong and supple.
2. Let your body tell you when to push. The whole reason the pushing stage is a slow process is to allow your tissues time to stretch.
  - a. First of all, wait until the urge to push is overwhelming before you begin to push. This allows your brain to suffuse your perineum with hormones, making it stretchy and supple.
  - b. Secondly, push in a position that feels good to you.
  - c. Thirdly, LISTEN TO YOUR BODY. It will tell you when to push and when to take a break. If you follow your body's lead, you will slowly rock the baby down the birth canal. After each push, you will feel the baby slip back. This is good. It allows your tissues to stretch and release, so that the next time you push, they will stretch a little bit more. When you get the sensation of burning (often lovingly referred to as the *ring of fire*), that is a signal from your body to slow down and give your tissues a moment to catch up, which you can do by panting or blowing.
  - d. A point will come when you will know that if you *just give one gigantic push you'll get this baby off your bum and this will all be over with*. IGNORE THIS THOUGHT. If you give one gigantic push, your tissues will probably tear. Stretching happens gradually over a number of pushes.
3. Consider practicing perineal stretching.