

# Maintaining Freedom of Movement

How to Keep Mobile in Any Environment

Research shows that moving freely in labor improves a woman's sense of control, may decrease her need for pain medication, and reduces the length of her labor. Sometimes it is hard to move in labor due to routine procedures or lack of support and space. This list provides proven tips for women who want to stay free to move during labor.

## Choose a care provider and your birth place carefully.

Select a care provider and birth location that will support your desire to move and change positions. When choosing a birth setting, look for birth balls, rocking chairs, squatting bars, and tubs.

## Stay home until you are in active labor.

It's often easier to move and respond to your labor at home. Wait until your contractions are five minutes apart and last about one minute before going to the hospital. If your cervix is not dilated more than four centimeters when you arrive at your birth setting, consider going home or for a walk until your cervix dilates more.

## Be careful about interventions that limit mobility.

Request that your care provider refrain from using any routine intervention that may make it harder to move around. This will mean that continuous monitoring of the baby's heart rate ("continuous EFM") and intravenous lines (IVs) are only used when needed for medical reasons. If there is a medical reason for these, tell your care provider that you want to maintain as much freedom of movement as possible. There are ways to minimize the effect of these interventions on your ability to move freely.

## Arrange to have continuous support in labor.

Consider hiring a professional labor assistant (a doula) or choose a close friend or family member who makes you feel safe and confident. Ask them to remind you to try different positions, movement, and activities in labor.

## Plan to give birth without pain medications.

All pain medications make it hard to stand or walk during labor. Standing is usually impossible when an epidural is used. Pain medications often lead to the need for other interventions, such as IVs and continuous electronic fetal



*Waiting to go to the hospital until you are in active labor gives you lots of freedom to move.*

monitoring, which restrict movement. Choose to birth at a place that provides easy access to a tub. Using water in labor decreases the need for pain medication. If you want an epidural in labor as a pain-coping technique, wait until labor has progressed and you have already used lots of movement to help the baby rotate and move down in the pelvis.

## Attend a childbirth class.

You'll learn which positions can help in each stage of labor. Keep a list of the positions that you like best, and bring it with you as a reminder in labor. Practice positions and movements before your labor begins, so you and your partner feel comfortable and confident using them.