



Coping Skills for the First Stage of Labour

The first stage of labour is when you are feeling regular contractions through your abdomen or back. In this stage, uterine contractions are opening up the cervix to ten centimetres so the baby can move out of the tummy.

In the first few hours keep active; clean the house, or go for a walk so you can distract yourself from those niggles. Go back to sleep if it's night time with a hot pack, or take Paracetamol.

Once in active labour, with **strong** regular contractions:

Mum to be	Support person
At the start of each contraction:	Look after your partner.
1. Breathe out any tension	"A long easy breath out through rounded lips" Stop and repeat throughout contraction.
2. Lean forwards	"Lean on me", or the wall or ironing board in standing. As labour progresses supported positions include leaning onto pillows in kneeling, all fours, or onto pillows on a table or back to front on a chair.
3. Rock	"Rock away the contraction"
4. Let go	"Low shoulders, long soft fingers, open thighs" Switch your brain off!



Other coping strategies

- Music
- Aromatherapy
- Shower
- Bath - after 5cms dilation
- Soft, dim lighting
- Hot packs/cold water sprays
- Massage
 - Stroking
 - Scalp massage
 - Picking up at the top of the shoulders
 - Kneading at the base of the spine
 - Hand/Foot stroking
- Fit ball rock on it, or lean onto the ball
- TENS machine
- Verbal encouragement
- Light snacks
- Sips of fluid
- Empty bladder regularly.



For other helpful tips, please see:

- Massage in Labour.
- Relaxation Techniques.
- TENS for Labour.

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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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