

## Provider Information

### CB-RO ROLE OF LABOR AND DELIVERY PARTNER/COACH

**OUTCOME:** The patient and delivery partner/coach will understand the role of the labor and delivery partner/coach and be able to demonstrate the various techniques taught.

#### STANDARDS:

1. Explain that the role of the partner/coach during the stages of labor and birth is to help the mother focus and practice techniques and to assist in comfort measures.
2. Refer to “PN - Prenatal, “PP - Postpartum.

### Highlights of Role of Labor and Delivery Partner Coach

Discuss with the expectant mother the non-pharmacologic pain relief methods for labor

#### **Pain Management during Labor: A natural delivery with no medications!**

Talk with your spouse, partner, or friend to ask if they will go with you when you go into labor to deliver your baby. It is an important role. The woman in labor will look to their labor coach for strength and encouragement. Your coach may find it hard to watch you in pain as you go through labor but the coach will never forget the birth of your baby.

#### **Tips for the Labor and Delivery Coach: Know what to expect**

Labor is not the right time to be flipping through a pregnancy book about childbirth. Do your reading beforehand. Go to a childbirth class with an open mind – you will get solid, basic information, as well as a sense of how other coaches are planning to get through the event.

Most women labor for hours before they even go to the hospital. It is more comfortable to spend the early stages of labor at home. Many hospitals will not let a laboring woman check in until her contractions are regular and coming about every five minutes. You may want to time the contractions every so often, so you can have a sense of how things are progressing, but you do not need to do so continuously. It is much better for both of you to save your energy for the delivery room.

Be available to do whatever she finds relaxing at this point, such as watching TV, taking a walk, or cuddling on the bed. This isn't the time for finishing up last-minute projects or doing household chores.

#### **Be flexible**

The same labor strategies do not work for all women. Before the baby's due date, take time to discuss the labor process with the soon-to-be mom and find out how she wants the labor to go. Later, you can take the initiative with your laboring mom's wishes in mind. Be prepared to change course – part of a labor coach's job is to decide what works and drop what does not work.

### **Don't take things personally**

A woman in labor may be in her own world. Giving birth is a long, hard job, and some women cope by reaching deep inside themselves.

The laboring woman may become outwardly irritable at times, too. For instance, she may love having you massage her early in labor, and then decide that she does not want to be touched at all! It is important not to misunderstand her behavior as a rejection of you.

### **Bring a few things for yourself**

Most pregnant moms ready their overnight bags long before their due date. But you may be spending the night at the hospital, too, so don't forget to pack some things for yourself. Essentials: A change of clothes, comfortable shoes, and a sustaining snack (one with no strong odors, please!).

### **Ask questions**

Medical professionals should, but don't always, explain what they're doing and whether it's mandatory. Don't be shy about seeking out information, whether about medical procedures or about helping the laboring mom get more comfortable – especially if she's not up to asking questions herself.

### **Be her advocate**

A laboring woman is not always in the best condition to make hard decisions or assertive requests. Be ready to step in if the situation calls for it. You may need to ask that her healthcare practitioner be woken from a nap, that an anesthesiologist be paged, or that a mirror be brought in. And if Mom plans to breastfeed, help make sure that she has a chance to do so soon after the baby's born, and that someone's there to help her if she's having trouble.

### **Help her stay focused and relaxed**

Suggest different coping techniques when necessary, drawing on the methods you've both learned in childbirth classes. For example, suggest position changes or encourage her to find something – such as a breathing pattern, your face, or even a foot rub – to focus on during the contractions, and bring her back to it whenever she starts to think she won't make it.

### **Know your limitations**

A lot goes on in the birthing room. Be aware of what you are willing to do during the process and what you want to leave to the professionals. For example, if you are not comfortable cutting the umbilical cord (even if that was the plan), just say so.

### **Just be there**

This is one of those events for which showing up is the most important thing of all. Even if you want to – or have to – leave most of the hands-on stuff to the pros, your presence matters. And no matter how you really feel, project a sense of confidence and calm reassurance: "You're doing great! Everything's going fine."

Click here for a Patient Education Handout for the mother on the **Role Labor and Delivery Coach during childbirth.**

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