



FLINT

Antepartum Checklist

36 WEEKS

Labor Guidelines - True labor is often difficult to accurately determine unless there is a cervical change. This is especially true for first time delivering mothers where regular contractions may not result in cervical dilatation. Early labor, when the cervix gradually thins, can precede true labor by many hours or days. This is a time when you should try to rest if at night or walk and remain upright to enhance labor if during the day. Some vaginal discharge, mucousy, with tinges of blood, are normal. If there is a large amount of bright red blood you should alert your provider.

When and How to notify your provider - Early Labor may cause you to be emotionally excited and nervous. It is often better to wait until you are having to concentrate and seriously work with your contractions before calling the New Life Center. Keep the New Life Center number (342-2279) handy by the phone so you don't have to look for it when you are uncomfortable. If you live a long way from the hospital or have had very rapid labors in the past, discuss this with you provider to come up with an appropriate plan for coming to the New Life Center.

Review and Sign Birth Plan - By this time you should have discussed your birth plan with your provider. It should be signed and forwarded to the New Life Center by your provider, so we can help you have the labor experience that is closest to the one you are hoping for. Although things don't always go as planned, by sharing your special needs/requests with your provider, you will increase your chances of having a very satisfying and safe birth experience.

Cervical Culture/Group B Strep Status - At 35-37 weeks of pregnancy, a rectal/vaginal culture for Group B strep may be done. If your culture is positive you may receive antibiotics during your labor and special precautions may be taken. Please discuss this with your provider.

GBS is a bacteria that can be present in the vagina, without evidence of infection. It may come and go throughout your pregnancy. This is not a concern for your health, but can cause serious illness for your infant.

What's so good about Labor? - The hard work of natural labor leads to good things for you and your baby. We have placed a summary of many of those benefits on the reverse of this sheet. We look forward to seeing you.

What's So Good About Labor?

Catecholamines

The process of labor does stress an infant, resulting in a release of stress hormones (catecholamines, pronounced "cat-a-cola-means") that are crucial for the protection and good health of the baby.

Catecholamines cause vital processes in the baby which help it survive and adapt at birth, according to researchers Hugo Lagercrantz and Theodore Slotkin. The effects of the catecholamines on a baby, which include a slowing of the heart rate, protect it from less oxygen during contractions. The baby is also put into a highly alert state that researchers believe may help in infant attachment at birth.

From: A Good Birth & A Safe Birth

What do Catecholamines do ?

Improves Breathing

- increases lung surfactant
- increases lung-liquid absorption
- improves lung compliance
- dilates bronchioles

Protects Heart and Brain

- increases blood flow to vital organs

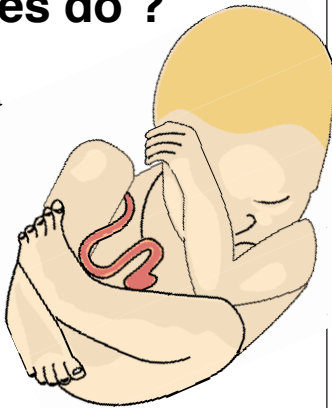
Mobilizes Fuel

- breaks down normal fat into fatty acids
- breaks down glycogen (in liver) to glucose
- stimulates new production of glucose by liver

Facilitates Bonding?

- dilates pupils
- appears to increase alertness

From: "The Stress of Being Born", Lagercrantz and Slotkin



Endorphins- The Body's Natural Narcotic

Circulating throughout your body are natural hormones that relax you when stressed and relieve pain when you hurt. Most mothers don't even know these biologic labor assistants exist and, more important, that they can influence when and how these hormones are released. In the 1970's researchers studying drug addiction stumbled upon the presence of specialized areas in the brain, called receptor sites, for morphine-like substances. They discovered endorphins (from, endogenous, meaning "produced in the body," and morphine-like substances), chemical pain relievers produced in the nerve cell that attach to receptor sites on the cell blunting the sensation of pain in these cells. Here's what we know about these natural remedies and how they can work for you.

- Endorphin levels go up during contractions in active labor (especially during the second stage of labor), are highest just after birth and return to prelabor levels two weeks postpartum.
- Endorphin levels were found to be highest during vaginal deliveries, less high in cesarean births in which the mother had also labored, and lowest in cesarean births performed before mother's labor had begun.
- Endorphin levels are elevated in newborns who had signs of fetal distress during delivery. The baby also receives these natural pain relievers during birth.

Endorphin levels are increased during strenuous exercise, and there is no activity in the world that is more strenuous than labor.

As an added benefit, endorphins stimulate the secretion of prolactin, the relaxing "mothering" hormone that regulates milk production and gives a woman a boost in interacting with her baby. Researchers believe that it is a combination of these hormones that contribute to the "birth high".

- Endorphins may account for the "high" mothers experience after a birth when sleep eludes them. Also, it seems possible that a mother having a surgical birth without going through labor may experience lower hormone levels after birth, which could account for the sometimes observed delay in milk supply after a cesarean birth.
- Like commercially produced narcotics, endorphins behave differently from woman to woman. This may be why some women are more sensitive to pain than others.
- Instead of the periodic "blast" you get with injectable narcotics (often making you groggy), your endorphins give you steady assistance throughout labor.
- Laboring mothers who are aware of these hormonal effects describe their feelings as "naturally drugged." Set the birthing conditions that let these labor helpers work for you.

From: The Birth Book by William Sears MD & Martha Sears RN

Labor For a While Before Your Cesarean

You may think, "Why should I go through all that work and pain if I'm going to have a cesarean anyway?" While it may be inconvenient for the hospital or the doctor, it is often medically beneficial for your baby if you labor as long as possible before an elective cesarean. Besides indication that baby is ready to be born, some precesarean contractions let the baby benefit from the natural hormones of labor. Studies show that babies delivered by cesarean after mothers labor a while have fewer breathing problems in the first few days after birth than babies whose mothers were not in labor. Labor prepares baby for changes that are coming rather than being snatched from his nest without warning.

From: The Birth Book by Dr. William Sears