

# Birthing – Facts vs fiction

**A = Ask for more time.** As long as you and your baby are doing well, it is safe for labour to last a long time. It can be normal for progress to be very slow before the cervix is dilated to 6cm, taking more than 6 hours for the cervix to dilate from 4 to 5cm and more than 3 hours to dilate from 5 to 6 cm

**B = Birth plans increase vaginal birth.** In a large (14 630 deliveries) study, researchers found that women who attended childbirth education classes and / or had written birth plans were significantly more likely to have a vaginal birth

**C = Caesarean surgery increases risks after hysterectomy later in life.** Previous caesarean surgery increases the risk by 16-29,6% of experiencing at least one complication following hysterectomy later in life

**D = Drinking and eating in labour.** Research shows that people labouring under less restrictive eating and drinking policies had shorter labours by about 16 minutes

**E = Exercise during pregnancy.** Levels of endorphins rise during pregnancy and peak around the time of the spontaneous onset of labour. Women who exercise regularly throughout pregnancy have even higher levels of endorphins and shorter, less painful labours

**F = Failure to progress in labour.** As long as the labouring person and baby are healthy, and as long as the length of labour does not meet criteria of labour arrest, labouring people should be treated as if they are progressing normally

**G = Gentle birthing breath** – for second stage of labour. The focus is to keep the jaw and perineum relaxed

**H = Healthcare providers** who increase your confidence in your ability to grow and birth your baby will help keep your stress levels down

**I = Inductions** should ideally not be done before 39 weeks of gestation routinely

**J = "Jump up and down"** to ensure you get what you want to from your labour and birthing experience

**K = Vitamin K is a vitamin we need to clot blood.** It is given to prevent a rare but possible deadly brain bleed in the first 6 months of life

**L = Let labour begin on its own.** Both you and your baby will have the optimal number of receptors needed by your birth hormones to facilitate labour and birth if labour begins on its own. Increases in foetal catecholamines in the last days of pregnancy will prepare the baby's lungs for air breathing after the birth

**M = Microbiome formation of the baby** is healthier in vaginal birth and breastfed babies, setting up a baby on the road to a healthy life and not one of chronic disease

**N = Nipple stimulation as an induction tool for labour.** Researchers recommend that women focus only on one breast at a time and include rest intervals.

**O = Oxytocin.** Natural oxytocin is released both in the brain causing a calm and connection response and, in the uterus, causing labour contractions. Artificial oxytocin can cause contractions but does not enter the brain so try to avoid having it

**P = Pushing.** Do not begin pushing until you feel the urge to do so. Waiting to push until you feel the urge will decrease the time you spend pushing. Pushing in response to your body's urges, rather than being "coached", is safer for you and your baby

**Q = Questions.** Ask questions and ask for the research evidence to substantiate their answers so you can make truly informed decisions

**R = Relaxation strategies** – Prolonged high or severe levels of stress are linked to premature birth, poor growth of your baby and reduced newborn head size

**S = Stay at home in early labour.** Experts recommend that hospital admission be delayed until the onset of active labour at about 6cm dilation

**T = Tea – red raspberry leaf tea during pregnancy to induce labour naturally.**

**U = Ultimate experience is for birth** to be a vaginal birth, without medication, having your baby skin to skins so he can go through the 9 instinctive stages and long term breastfeeding

**V = Visualisation and relaxation** are complementary medicine strategies used in conjunction with facilitated partner support that reduced epidurals by 65% and caesareans by 44%

**W = Water birth.** Waterbirth is a reasonable option for low-risk birthing people. Evidence shows that babies born in the water have similar health outcomes compared to babies born on land

**X = Xtra care.** Use a doula. Doulas are experts at non-pharmacological pain management strategies which promote the release of endorphins

**Y = You need to believe in yourself and in birth.** Most women (at least 85-90% can and should give birth vaginally

**Z = Zero in after birth** and make sure your baby is skin to skin with mom immediately and uninterrupted after birth. This will cause a peak in maternal oxytocin that reduces the risk of postpartum haemorrhage and promotes mother-infant bonding

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