PATHWAY TO A HEALTHY BIRTH

Helping Your Hormones Do Their Most Wonderful Work

IN HEALTHY PREGNANCIES, THE PATHWAY SHOWN HERE IS THE SAFEST, SMOOTHEST ROUTE FOR LABOR, BIRTH AND THE CRUCIAL DAYS THAT FOLLOW.

Staying on the right path means helping your body’s natural hormones work well for you!

DURING PREGNANCY

- Pregnancy is a time to plan for safe, smooth childbirth.
- Low levels of stress hormones help you and your baby stay healthy

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

✓ Choose the care provider and birth place that support your baby’s abilities while avoiding unneeded tests and treatments.
✓ Find a doula to help you stay calm and relaxed while giving birth.
✓ Limit stress during pregnancy when possible.

WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY FROM THE PATHWAY?

✗ Getting an epidural may slow your labor and make pushing difficult.
✗ Getting synthetic oxytocin (“Pitocin”) to strengthen your labor can interfere with your body’s hormones.
✗ Feeling stressed or anxious during pregnancy.

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

✓ Use comfort measures such as tubs, showers, and birth balls.
✓ Stay upright and move around for good labor progress; be patient while staying in touch with your care provider.
✓ Find a doula and get support from your provider and birth place when possible.

WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY FROM THE PATHWAY?

✗ Inducing labor* (or having a cesarean) before your body is ready to give birth and your baby is ready to be born.

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

✓ Getting personalized support while giving birth.
✓ Not having skilled, personalized support while giving birth.
✓ Not breastfeeding shortly after birth and your baby is interested in feeding.

WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY FROM THE PATHWAY?

✗ Feeling stressed or anxious can slow down labor.
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EARLY LABOR

- Hormones prepare you for a smooth labor and birth.
- Hormones help avoid unneeded interventions and side effects

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

✓ Stay calm and relaxed while giving birth.
✓ Not feeling stressed or anxious during labor.
✓ Being separated from your baby after birth.

WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY FROM THE PATHWAY?

✗ Getting an epidural may slow your labor and make pushing difficult.
✗ Getting synthetic oxytocin (“Pitocin”) to strengthen your labor can interfere with your body’s hormones.
✗ Feeling stressed or anxious during pregnancy.

EARLY HOURS AND FIRST DAYS AFTER BIRTH

- Hormones help you and your baby feel calm, connected, and ready to breastfeed.

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

✓ Breathing and other birth practices.
✓ Getting support from your provider.
✓ Feeling connected and calm.

WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY FROM THE PATHWAY?

✗ Feeling stressed or anxious can slow down labor.
✗ Getting synthetic oxytocin (“Pitocin”) to strengthen your labor can interfere with your body’s hormones.

EARLY HOURS AND FIRST DAYS AFTER BIRTH

- Hormones help you and your baby feel calm, connected, and ready to breastfeed.

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

✓ Being separated from your baby.
✓ Being distracted with other people and activities in the days after birth.

WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY FROM THE PATHWAY?

✗ Getting an epidural may slow your labor and make pushing difficult.
✗ Getting synthetic oxytocin (“Pitocin”) to strengthen your labor can interfere with your body’s hormones.
✗ Feeling stressed or anxious during pregnancy.

Selected References

17. Fink et al. ChildbirthConnection.org/BirthPathway
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