

# Helping yourself while helping your wife or partner in labor

Giving birth is an intensely physical process for the woman giving birth and sometimes we forget what an intensely physical process it is to assist a woman giving birth! Here are a few ideas of ways to take care of yourself while you are helping your wife or partner labor and give birth:

- Bring healthy snacks for yourself (avoid anything that is strong smelling, like garlic, and avoid coffee): granola bars, sandwiches, trail mix, crackers.
- Wear comfortable clothes and shoes.
- Dress in layers—the birth room may be cold or it may be hot.
- Wear clothes that you don't mind getting stained.
- Use good body mechanics when providing physical support to your wife. Bend your knees slightly and keep your back straight when helping support your wife in a standing squat. If providing counterpressure on her back with your hands, keep your arms straight and lean your body weight down onto her back to provide the counterpressure, rather than using the muscles in your hands or arms to provide it.
- Take breaks if you need to—it is okay to take a bathroom break or to get something to drink! If your wife or partner does not want to be left alone, have your doula or a helpful nurse serve as a quick stand-in for you. Use your judgment as to whether to announce to your wife that you are taking a quick bathroom break. Some women may be upset at being “abandoned” without warning, while other are so into the rhythm of labor that they will not notice you taking a quick break and it is better not to disturb their rhythm by making a big announcement that you are leaving.
- If you feel yourself getting tense or anxious, take slow, deep breaths from your abdomen or do a few quick tension relieving stretches such as rolling your neck from side to side or rotating your shoulders.
- I encourage women to use affirmations during pregnancy and then during labor to help them greet their labors with confidence and acceptance. Though it might seem silly or feel awkward, you may wish to develop some affirmations to use yourself as well as you assist your wife in labor—try things like, “I am calm and confident” or, “each contraction is bringing our baby closer,” or, “my mind is relaxed, my body is relaxed,” or, “her body knows how to birth our baby.”
- Trust birth and the process—your partner's body is well designed to give birth to your baby. She can do it! Believe in her and believe in yourself!