6 Simple Steps for a Healthy & Safe Birth

There is a lot of medical research that tells you and your care provider what kind of care will most likely keep your baby’s birth safe and healthy.

But, the care pregnant women receive doesn’t always match the research.

Despite risks and limited benefits, a survey of new moms showed:

- 93% had continuous electronic fetal monitoring (EFM)
- 87% had restrictions on eating
- 66% had restrictions on drinking
- 55% had artificially ruptured membranes
- 35% had an episiotomy

Even though they are “routine” practices, some can actually make childbirth more difficult and less safe.

Keep childbirth simple!

Lamaze has summed up years of research into 6 Healthy Birth Practices, proven to promote the safest, healthiest birth possible for mother and baby.

1. Let labor begin on its own
   - Normal pregnancy lasts 38-42 weeks!
   - Natural start of labor usually means your body and your baby are ready for birth
   - Induction can make contractions harder and stress the baby

2. Walk, move around and change positions throughout labor
   - Help your uterus work more efficiently
   - Use upright positions and gravity to help pull baby down
   - Actively responding to labor may help you feel more confident, less afraid

3. Bring a loved one, friend or doula for continuous support
   - Praise, reassurance and encouragement decrease stress
   - Physical support can help decrease pain
   - Informational support can increase confidence

4. Avoid interventions that are not medically necessary—induction, artificially ruptured membranes, restricted food & drink, IV fluids, continuous EFM, episiotomy, epidural and cesarean
   - Many of these disrupt the birthing process, making it more difficult
   - Choose a birth setting with a low rate of interventions
   - Ask if your care provider routinely uses any interventions
   - During labor, ask if there is another alternative

5. Avoid giving birth on your back and follow your body’s urge to push
   - Use gravity to your advantage to shorten the pushing stage
   - Push when your body tells you
   - Use upright or side-lying positions
   - Use adjustable hospital beds to support different pushing positions

6. Keep your baby with you—it’s best for you, your baby and breastfeeding
   - Skin-to-skin during the first hour helps baby transition
   - Weighing and other routine procedures can wait
   - Ask which procedures can be done while holding baby
   - Rooming in with baby doesn’t prevent you from sleeping

Push for the safest, healthiest birth possible. Visit www.Lamaze.org/PushForYourBaby to learn more.