

Labour in a Hurry

What to do if your Midwife isn't going to get there in time

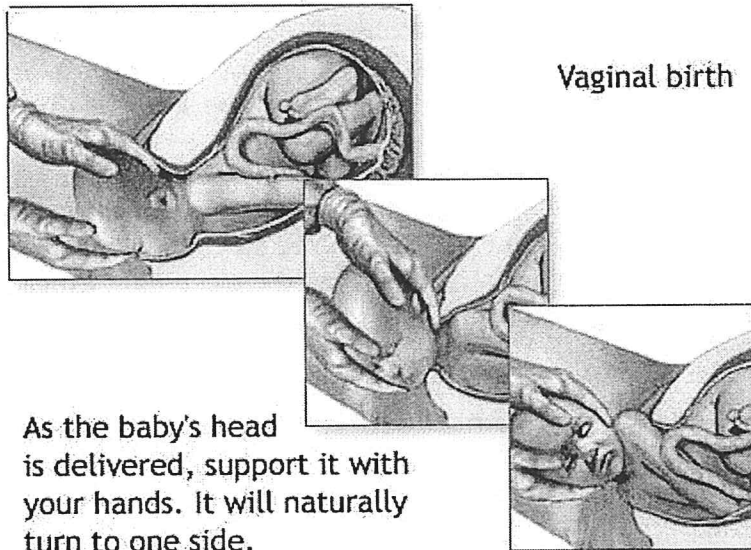
Early stages of labor can last many hours. During this time, the mother's contractions open the cervix, and the baby begins to move down the birth canal. Once the cervix dilates fully, the mother usually feels the uncontrollable urge to push, and the baby's head begins to appear at the vaginal opening. If this is the woman's first baby, the pushing may last long enough for your midwives and/or ambulance to arrive. If it is her second or later baby, the head may deliver very quickly.

Causes

- Rapid delivery is most common in women who have:
 - Given birth quickly before
 - Given birth several times before
 - Gone into labor prematurely

Symptoms

- Regular contractions that are less than 2 minutes apart (timed from the beginning of one contraction to the beginning of the next).
- Urge to have a bowel movement (due to pressure from the baby's head against the rectum). Do not let her go to the toilet. If the baby is born there it could be injured.
- Strong urge to push.
- Bulging vaginal opening -- baby's head visible during contractions (it will recede or pull back between contractions).
- Mother saying, "The baby is coming!"
- If it's just the two of you, you may consider calling a neighbour for another set of hands and to read this page to you.



ADAM.

What to do

1. Call 911 and page your midwife. Keep the phone line free so that your midwife can call you back to talk you through the birth if she is not going to make it on time. **Unlock the door.**
2. Wash your hands well. Use sterile gloves if you have them.
3. Have the mother lie down, on her side if possible, on the bed or the floor with towels or a plastic sheet covered with towels.
4. Gather as many towels as possible for drying the baby off.
5. The mother may be pushing spontaneously. Let her do what her body tells her to do. Once you see the top of the baby's head, it will move out, and then back in again. This is normal. Remind her not to push when the contraction has gone away. Sometimes the pressure makes her feel like pushing anyway.
6. If the mother is panicky, try to keep her calm. Remember, babies who are coming this quickly know just what to do.
7. Place your hand against the area below the vaginal opening and apply gentle pressure during each contraction. This pressure will prevent the baby from coming too fast. A second hand placed gently against the vaginal opening over the baby's head will help control how quickly the baby's head comes out of the vaginal opening. If the mother puts her own hand on the top of the baby's head as it is delivering, it may reduce her chance of tearing.
8. As the baby's head is delivered, support it with your hands. It will naturally turn to one side. As soon as the head is out, have the mother stop pushing so that the baby's mouth and nose can be cleaned. Wipe the baby's mouth and nose with a dry towel.
9. If the umbilical cord is wrapped around the infant's neck during delivery, hook it with your forefinger and gently but quickly slip it over the baby's head. Do not cut it! If it will not slip easily over the baby's head, don't worry about it. Instead, continue trying to deliver the rest of the baby.
10. Once the head is delivered, the rest of the baby's body generally comes out quickly. Place your hands on either side of the baby's head and gently guide it downwards while the mother pushes until the top shoulder emerges. Then guide the baby upwards and support its head and shoulders as the rest of the baby emerges. Newborns are slippery, so hold the baby with a towel.
11. If the baby is breathing or crying, dry the baby off. Then wrap the baby in dry towels, covering the head (not the face) to keep him or her warm. Do not wash off the baby or wash the face. Place the baby on the mother's abdomen or chest (but be sure not to pull on the umbilical cord).
12. If the baby is not breathing or crying, place the baby's head lower than the feet on the mother's tummy and slap the soles of the feet. Quickly stimulate the baby by rubbing its back briskly with a towel. Continue to stimulate the baby and dry off the skin to prevent cooling.
13. The mother will continue to have contractions until the placenta is expelled. The placenta can normally take up to 30 minutes to an hour to be delivered, so do not worry if it doesn't happen right away. Encourage the baby to nurse or lick at the breast to encourage the placenta to come.
14. You do not have to tie off the cord or cut it. Wait until help arrives. While the placenta is still inside, keep the baby warm on the mother's tummy. After the placenta is delivered, keep the baby and the placenta at basically the same level (ie, placenta in a bowl on the bed, baby in mother's arms.)
15. Once the placenta has been expelled, massage the mother's abdomen to stimulate uterine contractions. This will help control uterine bleeding.
16. Stay calm, keep mother and baby warm and help will arrive shortly.