PATHWAY TO A HEALTHY BIRTH
Helping Your Hormones Do Their Most Wonderful Work

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

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

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

- Choose the care provider and birth place that support your body’s abilities while avoiding unwarranted tests and treatments
- Find a doula to help you stay calm and relaxed when you give birth
- Limit stress during pregnancy when possible

WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY FROM THE PATHWAY?

- Choosing the care provider and birth place that intervene in natural processes when you and your baby are healthy
- Not having skilled, personalized support while you are giving birth
- Feeling stressed during pregnancy

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

- Use comfort measures such as birthing ball, showers, and birthing ambiance
- Stay upright and move around for good labor and birth
- Stay calm and relaxed

WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY FROM THE PATHWAY?

- Going to the hospital early before labor is strong ("kicker" absent)
- Feeling stressed or anxious can slow down labor

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

- Early labor—Labor prepares you for a smooth labor and birth
- Hormones help avoid unnecessary interventions and side effects

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?

- Early and active labor
- Making sure you are ready to give birth
- Not having skilled, personalized support

WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY FROM THE PATHWAY?

- Learning to breastfeed
- Not breastfeeding sufficiently after birth and when your baby is interested in feeding
- Feeling stressed or anxious

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

- Making sure your baby is well fed and comfortable
- Not breastfeeding sufficiently after birth
- Feeling stressed or anxious

WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY FROM THE PATHWAY?

- Breathing exercises or massage
- Limiting distractions, stay calm, and focus on being with your baby in the days after birth

WHAT WILL HELP YOU STAY ON THE PATHWAY?

- Staying calm and relaxed, and get support from a doula
- Staying calm and relaxed
- Staying with your support person

EARLY HOURS AND FIRST DAYS AFTER BIRTH

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

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PATHWAY IN A BOOKLET MADE JUST FOR WOMEN AT ChildbirthConnection.org/BirthPathway

This information is not intended to be a substitute for the professional guidance of qualified health care providers.

Selected References:

© 2019 National Partnership for Women & Families. All rights reserved.