

Janine Smith

Checklist for Labour & Birth	
1	Do you feel safe? Do you need support/reassurance? Do you need to go to hospital? Do you need your midwife? Do you need quiet? Do you need lower lights? Do you need to focus on your breathing? What feels right for you?
2	What do you need? Say what you need to feel more supported, informed, reassured, comfortable and safe. Do you need to talk about pain relief?
3	Are you comfortable? Can you change into a position that feels better for you so you are more comfortable with contractions and to rest in-between?
4	Can you be more upright? If you are on the bed, you can still use gravity by sitting upright in labour and, maybe with some support, being on your knees for birth. If you don't need to be on the bed, can you try being off it and wandering or nesting, using a ball, bean bags/cushions or a chair for support?
5	Are you using your breathing to stay calm and focused? If you are feeling tense, panicky or nervous, try to focus on your breathing to slow your heart rate down, to give you something positive to focus on and to get you back in control.
6	Do you need to eat? You don't have to eat a lot but nibbling on fruit and other healthy snacks can give you more energy. You may be really hungry after your baby has been born.
7	Are you going to the loo regularly? Going to the loo every hour or so will help to keep your bladder empty, which gives your baby more space to move.
8	Are you drinking plenty of water? Hospitals can be warm and it can also be easy to forget to drink enough. Pack some bendy straws to make it easier to drink when you are resting.
9	Are you able to rest? Rest when you can: flop, lean, relax, breathe and rest in-between your contractions, even if they are close together. Use a birth ball, chairs, pillows and bean bags, lean against the pool or the bed to rest and relax your muscles.
10	As your contractions intensify Try to be instinctive and work with them – move, breathe, be upright, accept them – and ask about your pain relief options.
11	Focus on the reality of your labour Accepting its pace and intensity, rather than what you think it should be like, can help you focus and identify what you need for rest, pain management and support.
12	Ask questions If something is suggested and you don't know what it is or why you need it, ask for more information. No-one will mind and it can be important to feel informed and included. Talk to your midwife so you know what your options are and what the next steps might be. Speak up if something doesn't feel right or you feel like you are not being listened to. This communication can often be the responsibility of birth partners.

Labour can last for several hours, sometimes leading into days: there isn't a right length of labour which is why it is important to make decisions as you go because your needs may alter, depending on how long – or short – it is.

It can be important for you to be comfortable, rested, able to work with your contractions, to be supported, calm and to be able to help your contractions work as effectively as possible.

As labour and birth can be unpredictable, you may need to make different decisions and your birth plan may change. Good communication makes a big difference to how informed and included you are, so it can help to ask questions to better understand your options and what can happen next, including having a caesarean.

Based on a range of evidence, experience and maternity policies:

- The Midwife's Labour & Birth Handbook
- Royal College of Midwives (RCM)
- Maye's Midwifery
- Pregnancy & Birth by Sheila Kitzinger
- Dynamic Positions in Birth by Margaret Jowitt
- Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG)
- NICE Guidelines
- Dr Sara Wickham
- Dr Rachel Reed
- NHS

About Janine

I have worked with expectant and new parents for over 20 years and I also attend births as a doula. Every parent I work with is different, as is every labour I have been part of, including my own.

As the person who is pregnant and in labour, it's important you are at the centre of your care, which is why I encourage you to personalise your birth preparation, to think about what matters to you. This means you can be honest, ask questions and plan around more realistic expectations.

Effective birth preparation means planning beyond your ideal birth, so you are better able to manage any challenges and changes.

Ways to work with me:

- Join the Birth & Baby Community
- Arrange for 1:1 sessions
- Read my antenatal course and birth guides

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Notes & Questions