



Eight Reasons for Unnecessary Pain in Labour

1. Tension

If you accidentally bump yourself, focus on going limp and relaxed. Breathe through the pain instead of tensing up. Like the surge exercise, relax and breathe nice slow deep breaths.

2. Paying Attention Too Soon

It is easy to become obsessed with timing contractions from the very first contraction. Don't waste your energy by paying attention too early. If they wake you in the middle of the night, try to go back to sleep or relax and do some mindfulness exercises to reserve your energy.

If you can talk through a contraction, they are likely just starting to thin and move your cervix forward. This process can take some time. So, try to ignore them and do something you enjoy like watching a movie, seeing friends, going for a walk.

3. Lack of sleep

A tired body is less able to deal with labour, causing everything to "feel" more so, be sure to get plenty of rest in the days leading up to your labour and use the early mild contractions to get some sleep or if you can't sleep, rest with a relaxation track or music.

4. Thirst

If you do not take sips of water or juice between your contractions, you stand a good chance of becoming dehydrated. When your body is dehydrated, your muscle output is decreased by 30%. Dehydration also heightens feelings of exhaustion and can elevate your temperature.

5. Hunger

Your body uses food as its energy source. If you are not eating during labour, you are depriving your body of energy it needs to labour. No one should stop you from eating!

6. Need to Urinate

During active labour, you may not be able to distinguish the need to urinate. Your uterus will put pressure on your bladder as it contracts. The best way to prevent pain from an over-full bladder is to urinate frequently (at least every two hours)



7. Performance Anxiety

Counting contractions and going to the hospital too soon can cause anxiety.

Being in the hospital too early makes the labour seemingly slower than if you had stayed at home and busied yourself with your life. Having nurses and doctors checking on you can make the "seeming slow" labour seem even slower, causing the mum to feel that she has to perform better, labour must get moving. This anxiety can be enough to send some women into the fear/tension/pain cycle.

8. Lying on your back

When you are on your back, the contracting uterus has to move "up" against gravity, which is much more work than simply moving forward. You can constrict the blood flow to the heart, causing you to be light-headed (this can also compromise blood flow to the baby)

Your sacrum needs to be able to move during labour to allow the baby space to pass through. This can be uncomfortable if there is pressure on your sacrum from you lying on it. Staying off your back can help in preventing labour pain.

(Adapted from an article by Jennifer Vanderlaan.)