



## Perception of Contractions

Contractions can be painful but they trigger essential hormone interactions designed to keep labour as normal and as safe as possible for mother and baby.

Everyone manages differently. Moving around in response to the sensations of contractions can provide comfort in a physiological way.

Labour does not hurt all the time. Between each contraction there is a break where mum can rest, move, have a drink, make herself comfortable and prepare for the next surge.

Transition is often a difficult time for women but it does signal progress and heralds the baby's imminent arrival.

Remember your hormones! Endorphins are inhibited by Adrenalin which is produced when we are fearful and anxious. For mum keeping as relaxed possible will help. If you are not good at relaxing – start practicing now! Think about ways of increasing mum's Oxytocin levels.

Contractions can be diagnostic. If all is going well they will be manageable, indicating a good flow of hormones. When contractions become very long, strong and close together it may be because you are making progress. If all the discomfort is in mum's back – get the midwife to check the position of the baby – if baby is posterior leaning forwards or on all fours may help baby to turn.

The pain of labour is not life threatening! Remember the emotional high produced by the endorphins is beneficial to the baby and have been found to make an essential contribution to the bonding process.

### **Contractions tell you:**

1. You're in labour
2. Where you are in labour
3. How to move in labour
4. Endorphin production is going well
5. That everything is going well.

### **It's not just Mum!**

The following will have a bearing on how mum perceives the pain she experiences-

1. The reactions of Midwife / other caregivers
2. Your birth partners responses
3. The environment – can you relax here?
4. Self Help pain relief (breathing, massage, water, positions)
5. Medical pain relief (gas and air, TENS, pethidine, epidural)

6. Knowledge – being able to visualise what is happening inside and/or understand what is going on can make a huge difference.