

## **Breathing Techniques during birth**

### **First stage (4cm – full dilation)**

#### **Early first stage**

**Full yogic breathing** – to sustain and focus, draw attention within, lower blood pressure and maintain calm. Breathe out into a contraction and focus on the exhale and then continue breathing as feels comfortable; find a rhythm.

**3 part breath** - breathing into the belly, then drawing a little more breath into the ribcage, allowing the ribs to widen all the way up to the collarbone. Exhale from the top downward, let the air out from the ribcage, allow the ribs to slide closer together and the belly to deflate, gently drawing the navel towards the spine. The benefits are similar to those of other deep-breathing techniques which, while calming the mind and relaxing the body, slow the heart rate and have a calming effect on the central nervous system. They also oxygenate the blood and purge the lungs of residual carbon dioxide.

**Humming breath** - If in doubt breathe out! The out breath is the antidote to pain. If massive contractions and you can't help but hold your breath, use sound to help you exhale. Breathe into your partner's hands. Your partner puts their hands on your lower back; you breathe 'down your back' and 'into your partner's hands'.

**Once you are having 3 contractions lasting 40 seconds or more over 10 mins this is the time to call the midwife/hospital**

#### **Later First stage**

It's tempting to start to breath too quickly at this stage so your partner can lead you to take slower breaths by breathing with you.

**Horse breath** - If you find your jaw tensing up, you can exhale like a horse through flapping lips. Aim to make a sound, resonating the air between your lips.

**Blowing out the candles** - When expansions come that are sharper to handle, breathe out with small out breaths through the mouth, as if you are cooling some soup or blowing candles out.

**Golden Thread Breath** - The purpose of this breath is to block the pain receptors in the brain, by re-focusing the mind on visualising a golden thread. Use your imagination with this. You can visualise a thin golden thread, a big fat golden ribbon, golden light spiralling from the mouth etc.

Lips barely apart, breathe in through nose and out through lips. Fine, long, thin breath; the longer the breath the farther out you follow it. The farther out it spins, the more focused the mind needs to be; the more focused the mind on the out breath, the more powerful the antidote to pain.

Sounded breath – e.g. sssshhhhhh, hhhhaaaaaammmmm, rrraaaaammmmm, oooooohhhhhmmmmmmmmmm.

## Transition stage

**Full yogic breathing** – to sustain and focus, draw attention within, lower blood pressure and maintain calm. Breathe out into a contraction and focus on the exhale and then continue breathing as feels comfortable; find a rhythm.

**Golden Thread Breath** - Lips barely apart, breathe in through nose and out through lips. Fine, long, thin breath; the longer the breath the farther out you follow it. The farther out it spins, the more focused the mind needs to be; the more focused the mind on the out breath, the more powerful the antidote to pain.

**Vocalise** – whatever sounds want to come out let them e.g groans, moans, oooohhs and aaahhs

## Second stage

The longer you can extend the breath out, the further the baby is able to move down the passage during one contraction.

**Birthing Breath (Cafetiere Breath)** - With the birthing breath, you allow your conscious awareness to descend down the body with each out breath. Begin by taking an in breath as deeply as you can and focus on moving down your spine on the out breath. Wherever your mind focuses at the end of your exhalation is where you begin from with your next inhalation. Keep moving down the body with each out breath until you are focused in the cervix, birth canal and perineum. This is where you focus on expanding with each forthcoming exhalation.

You are effectively using your out breath as you would the plunger of a cafetiere. The diaphragm works with the abdominal muscles, pushing down on the uterus and expanding (relaxing) the pelvic floor muscles to ease your baby through the birth canal gently.

Try voicing your breath with a 'haah' sound that feels good and helps abdominals work with bearing down contractions. Extend the exhale as long as you can to increase the pressure of your uterus.

This breath can also be used when birthing the placenta.

**Crowning** - break from pushing, you can lightly use the blowing out the candles breath - very gentle and soft small out breaths, to help disengage abdominal muscles from pelvic floor.

**Just remember – Breathe baby out!**

## First hour after birth and for 2 weeks after (couple of times a day)

**Basic Reverse Breath** - Apply this breath after birthing the placenta, and also for the first two weeks, several times a day, to restore muscles, uterus and pelvic alignment.

Begin by taking an in breath and feeling it rise from the base of your body upwards. As you begin to exhale, draw the abdomen in towards your spine and up towards your chest. Prolong the exhalation and movement as long as comfortable and then gently release abdominal muscles before the next inhalation.

Each exhalation should be longer than the inhalation but never forced.

Once bleeding has stopped, include lifting the whole of the pelvic floor upward as you draw your abdominal muscles in and up.