How can I help reduce Healthcare Associated Infections?

Infection control is important to the wellbeing of our patients, and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the main entrance of the hospital and at the entrance to every clinical area before coming into and after leaving the clinical area or hospital. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.

www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk
Follow us on Twitter @buckshealthcare

if you require an interpretation of this leaflet please contact the labour ward or birth centre.
What is early / latent phase labour?
Labour is a journey which can take a long time and every woman’s experience of early labour is different. Early labour (the latent phase) prepares the uterus (womb), cervix (neck of the womb) and baby for birth.

What happens in the latent phase of labour?
Before labour starts, the neck of the womb (the cervix) is long, firm and closed.

During the latent phase of labour your cervix is softening, thinning and drawing up.

During this stage you may:
• Lose your mucous plug (show).
• Experience rupture of membranes (waters breaking).
• You may experience painful contractions that last for a few hours which then stop and start again the next day.
• You may experience backache or discomfort in your thighs.

The assessment will include:
• Listening to your story.
• Discussing with you the signs of labour you are experiencing.
• Checking your blood pressure, temperature and pulse.
• Testing your urine sample.
• Palpating your abdomen to check the position of your baby.
• Measuring your abdomen to estimate your baby’s growth.
• Listening to baby’s heartbeat.
• Perform a vaginal examination.

Following the assessment a plan of care will be made with you.

Sometimes if labour is still in the early stages it may be recommended that you return home to await more established labour. If this happens you will be advised to contact your Birth Centre or Labour ward at any time for further advice or when you feel you wish to return.

We continually strive to improve the quality of information given to patients. If you have any comments or suggestions regarding this information booklet, please contact:

Head of Midwifery
Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust
Stoke Mandeville Hospital
Mandeville Road
Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP21 8AL
• Resist the urge to call everyone immediately and tell them you are in labour but do have a companion that you feel relaxed and comfortable with to support you.

• Try not to expend energy in an attempt to get labour going as you will wear yourself out and have less energy for when contractions become longer, stronger and closer together.

• Vary your periods of exercise with periods of rest, getting as much rest as possible.

• If the contractions are keeping you awake at night, sleep at other times as much as you can to help you conserve your energy for the rest of your labour.

• Make your environment as comfortable as possible (eg temperature, lighting, furnishings).

For advice/support
Get in touch with your Labour Ward/Birth Centre:

Wycombe Birth Centre 01494 425513/425520
Aylesbury Birth Centre 01296 316101
Labour Ward 01296 316103/316104

Phone the Birth Centre or Labour Ward immediately if:
• Your waters break.
• You are concerned that your baby is not moving as much as it was.
• You have any bleeding from your vagina.
• You feel unwell.

What happens if I go to the Birth Centre or hospital in early labour?
When you contact your Birth Centre or Labour Ward in early labour, you may be advised to continue self care in early stages of labour or you may be advised to come in for assessment.

How your cervix changes during labour

How long will the latent phase last?
The duration of the latent phase is not predictable. The latent phase can last several days or weeks before active labour starts. In the latent phase contractions can start and stop. This is normal. Contractions may continue for several hours but not become longer and stronger. This is normal too.

Remember that the latent phase can last a long time, especially for first time mums.

MIDWIVES “TIP” If the contractions reduce in frequency and intensity when you lie down to rest then do rest. Resist the urge to get up and pace around to keep them going as you will simply tire yourself out.

What can I do to help myself in the latent phase?
Try and stay as relaxed as you can and distract yourself from focusing on every contraction.
Try:

- Taking a walk.
- Watching TV/DVD.
- Listening to music.
- Having a nap.
- Playing a board/computer game.

**How do I manage the discomfort of the contractions in the latent phase of labour?**

You could try:

- Asking your partner or labour supporter to give you a massage.
- Alternating between putting a hot water bottle on any areas that ache (wrap it in a towel first) and putting a cool sports injury pack on any areas that ache.
- Keeping as mobile as you can.
- Adopting different positions of comfort (a birthing ball may help).
- Using a TENS machine if you have hired one.
- Using a relaxation or breathing technique.

**Can I eat and drink in latent phase of labour?**

It is important to eat and drink normally during early/latent phase labour to keep your strength and energy levels high. Eating little and often can be helpful.

Complex carbohydrates (eg bananas, pasta, baked beans, potato) are especially good as they will provide you with plenty of energy reserves.

Make sure you drink plenty of fluids, especially water, juices and sports drinks.

Remember to go to the toilet to empty your bladder regularly.