## **PATHWAY TO A HEALTHY BIRTH** Helping Your Hormones Do Their Most Wonderful Work IN HEALTHY PREGNANCIES, THE PATHWAY SHOWN HERE IS THE SAFEST, SMOOTHEST ROUTE FOR LABOR, BIRTH AND THE CRUCIAL DAYS THAT FOLLOW. Staying on the right path means helping your body's natural hormones work well for you! **DURING PREGNANCY LATE PREGNANCY** - Pregnancy is a time to plan for safe, - Hormones prepare you for safe and smooth childbirth smooth childbirth, breastfeeding, - Low levels of stress hormones help and bonding<sup>3</sup> you and your baby stay healthy<sup>1</sup> WHAT WILL HELP YOU WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY WHAT WILL HELP YOU WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY STAY ON THE PATHWAY? FROM THE PATHWAY? STAY ON THE PATHWAY? FROM THE PATHWAY? Choose the care **Choosing the care** Let labor begin on its own Inducing labor⁴ provider and birth place provider and birth place (or having a cesarean) before that support your body's that intervene in natural your body is ready to give abilities while avoiding processes when you and unneeded tests and your baby are healthy treatments Find a doula Not having skilled, personalized support to help you stay while giving birth Limit stress **Feeling stressed** during pregnancy when during pregnancy **ACTIVE LABOR EARLY LABOR** - Hormones prepare you for a safe - Hormones prepare you for a smooth birth and the time after birth<sup>7</sup> labor and birth<sup>5</sup> Hormones help avoid unneeded - Hormones help avoid unneeded interventions and side effects interventions and side effects WHAT WILL HELP YOU WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY WHAT WILL HELP YOU WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY STAY ON THE PATHWAY? FROM THE PATHWAY? FROM THE PATHWAY? STAY ON THE PATHWAY? Going to the hospital early Use comfort measures Stay home until labor is (X) Getting an epidural may slow before labor is strong ("active" labor)<sup>6</sup> your labor and make pushing strong ("active" labor), and birth balls while staying in touch Feeling stressed or anxious Stay upright and move C Getting synthetic oxytocin Stay calm and relaxed, can slow down labor around for good labor "Pitocin") to strengthen your labor can interfere with your during labor Feeling stressed or anxious Stay calm and relaxed **EARLY HOURS AND** FIRST DAYS AFTER BIRTH Hormones help you and your baby feel calm, connected, and ready to breastfeed9 If you or your baby need special medical care, you are likely to benefit from the checked practices whenever possible. WHAT WILL HELP YOU WHAT CAN PULL YOU AWAY STAY ON THE PATHWAY? FROM THE PATHWAY? Learn more about the pathway to a healthy birth in a booklet made just for women at Stay in skin-to-skin Being separated from your ChildbirthConnection.org/BirthPathway contact with your baby in Evidence and Implications for Women, Babies, and Maternity Care by Sarah J. Buckley. Available with full extensive references at ChildbirthConnection.org/HormonalPhysiology Not breastfeeding shortly Breastfeed soon after birth and when your after birth and when your baby is interested in feeding This information is not intended to be a substitute for the professional in feeding<sup>12</sup> guidance of qualified health care providers. Being distracted with Limit distractions, stay **Selected References** Fink et al. J Perinat Neonatal Nurs, 2012:296-306 Hodnett et al. Cochrane Database Syst Rev, 2013:CD003766 calm, and focus on being other people and activities in the days after birth Fuchs et al. Am J Obstet Gynecol. 1984: 150:734-41 CHILDBIRTH Phaneuf et al. *J Reprod Fertil*, 2000:91-7 Blanks et al. *BJOG*, 2003(Suppl):46-51 after birth13 ram oπtne nal partnership for women & familie∗ Holmes et al. BJOG, 2001:1120-4 Hillman et al. *Clin Perinatol*, 2012:769-83 Anim-Somuah et al. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*, 2011:CD000331 Nissen et al. Acta Obstet Gynecol Scand, 1995:530-3 Moore et al. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*, 2012:CD003519 Bystrova et al. *Birth*, 2009:97-109 © 2015 National Partnership for Women & Families. 12. Khan et al. Matern Child Health J, 4 June 2014 13. Winberg. Dev Psychobiol, 2005:217-29 All rights reserved.