

‘Building your nest’

During your labour and birth it is important for you to feel calm, confident and in control. Women, like other mammals, often seek out a safe and secure place to give birth, so it is important to create a birthing environment that is just right for you. We often refer to this as ‘building your nest’.

Hormones in Labour:

Oxytocin is a ‘feel good’ hormone that we release at times of happiness. In labour, rising levels of oxytocin cause the uterus to contract. You also release endorphins during labour; these are your body’s natural pain killers. Oxytocin powers the contractions and makes labour more efficient, whilst endorphins are there to help make your labour more comfortable. We know that the transition into hospital can be stressful and trigger the release of adrenaline. As adrenaline levels rise, your ‘good’ labour hormones (oxytocin and endorphins) can decrease. This then causes your contractions to slow, or even disappear, disrupting the progress of labour. It is therefore important that we try to help enhance the good labour hormones, oxytocin and endorphins, whilst trying to minimise levels of adrenaline. Making adjustments to your environment to help you to feel safe and secure can help with this.

How to ‘Build Your Nest’:

- Make use of low lighting. You may wish to dim the lights and make use of LED candles, battery powered fairy lights and lamps
- Make use of things that will enhance your physical comfort. This could be as simple as having your own pillow with you, or using equipment such as birthing balls, birthing mats, or perhaps having a warm bath
- When you arrive at the hospital, your midwife can help to arrange the room and the equipment within it so that you feel more comfortable
- You may take comfort in a certain scent, for example this could be an aromatherapy oil, it may be a freshly washed pillow case, or perhaps your favourite perfume
- Listening to certain music can trigger emotions such as happiness or relaxation, you may wish to create a playlist for labour
- Having a supportive birth partner present can also help you to feel more safe and secure.

If you require this information in an alternative language or format (such as Braille, audiotape or large print), please ask the staff who are looking after you.