



## LOCAL ANTENATAL COURSES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

### THE URGE TO PUSH

#### What is it?

The urge to push down (or "bearing down") usually marks the start of the second stage of labour. It is caused by the baby's head pressing down on your pelvic floor and rectum, and is quite involuntary.

#### What does it feel like?

Bearing down is generally an instinctive reaction that is very hard to resist. Your mood may also change, giving you a new burst of energy. Your uterus is capable of doing all the work ; when you get an urge to push, your body is just asking you to help.

#### What do I do?

You don't really *need* to do anything – as mentioned before, your uterus is capable of doing all the work. There are things you can do to help though :

#### Position

Upright is the most efficient position to be in when you are  
**Upright**  
pushing. This allows the downward muscular force of your  
**Forward**  
body and the downward force of gravity to work together  
**Open**  
in unison to expel your baby.



#### Breathing

Many women imagine they need to hold their breath when they push. Evidence suggests this doesn't help, and may even be harmful if it is prolonged. Try blowing out as you push down.

#### Relax

During pushing, the pelvic floor and the anal area should be fully relaxed, so make a conscious effort to let go of this area. Being upright makes this easier.

#### Effective pushing

It can sometimes be hard to push in the right place. Try if you can, to visualise the baby's pathway. Relax fully and keep your efforts smooth and not too



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strenuous.

### Resisting the urge



You may be told by your midwife at some stage to try not to push. Generally this happens at the start of the second stage if you are not completely dilated, and when the baby's head begins to crown. Frequently the advice given is to pant. This is actually quite hard to do for any length of time and you may begin to hyperventilate. Try holding up three fingers and imagine they are candles (partners can help here). Breathe in and blow them out with three quick blows. Repeat as long as necessary.

### What if I don't get the urge to push?

If you have had an epidural, this instinctive urge to push may be reduced or perhaps not felt at all. As you will be monitored, your midwife will be able to tell you when a contraction is coming. Bear down as though you were emptying your bowels, but keep it smooth and try not to strain. Remember, your uterus is doing most of the work. As it is unlikely you will be upright, pushing will be against gravity, so second stage may be longer. There is also a greater chance that forceps or ventouse may be needed to help the baby out. If you haven't had an epidural, but don't have the urge to push, allow your uterus to work efficiently by using those methods mentioned above. Give your body a chance – you may still be in transition.