

## RECOMMENDED FOOD AND DRINK FOR LABOUR

### **PRE-LABOUR or LATENT PHASE**

Menstrual-like cramps, backache, irregular, non-painful contractions less than 30 seconds and more than 5 minutes apart. You may feel nervous and not be inclined to eat. However, SLOW DOWN, REST, RELAX and EAT NOW. Women in labour are engaged in hard, physical work and need food for energy and to avoid exhaustion and dehydration. Your body needs a sustained supply of energy to function effectively. Eating appropriately during labour may well make contractions and the whole birth process more efficient. Remember, as labour progresses your digestive processes slow down and you become less able to digest fats and proteins. If you feel like eating something not listed, go ahead; listen to your body. Drink lots of water during your labour.

**Try: cereal with milk and sweetener (sugar, maple syrup, honey)  
oatmeal with milk and sweetener (sugar, maple syrup, honey)  
toast with nut butter, or jam or honey  
yogurt with fruit, fruit smoothies  
light nourishing soup (e.g. chicken noodle), with bread  
hot milk with honey to aid sleep  
scrambled eggs with toast  
pasta (light with vegetables – no heavy sauces)  
puddings**

### **EARLY ACTIVE LABOUR**

What might be happening: Regular contractions, quite manageable, starting to form an established pattern. You will be able to talk through most of the contractions. Eat and drink small amounts, regularly.

**Try: any of the foods listed above and;  
jello  
popsicles  
clear broth (e.g. miso soup)  
bananas**

### **ACTIVE LABOUR**

What might be happening: Regular contractions, every three to five minutes., lasting about a minute. They are now stronger and sharper at the peak of the contraction and you may need to focus on breathing through them. You will not be able to talk during the peak of the contraction. Keep well hydrated.

**Try: Water, small amounts often, ice chips  
Energy drinks, coconut water is excellent, juices,  
Teaspoon of honey  
Eat small amounts if you feel like it (most women don't)**

Have a selection of these foods and fluids stocked at home from 37 weeks on. You will also want to take supplies for yourself and your partner to the hospital. Include something nourishing for after the birth.