

## Let's Eat!

### Study Shows: No Rise in Complications for Moms Who Eat During Labor.

Women have long since been told that they could not eat during labor. Many have resorted to sneaking food when the nurse or doctor is out of the room. Sometimes having loved ones to make a run to the local fast food place or local market for something they desire. Others choose to follow policy and not eat and find themselves running out of energy when they need it most. Women are often working physically harder when in labor than they will at any other time in their lives. You would never prevent a tri-athlete who is racing, from getting the nutrition they need. These new moms are running the race of their lives and many of them lack the necessary energy they would get from food to reach the finish line.

Finally a study done in the UK shows what alternative birth professionals have been saying for years: Light eating during labor won't raise complication risk. Dr. Bing Liu and associates randomized 2,426 first time moms, low-risk laboring women to one of two groups, either allowing them to eat lightly during labor as they desired, or to have water only. No differences were found and the women surveyed after birth rated their overall labor experience as significantly better than that of women who were only allowed to drink water.

The feared complication of women eating during labor is pulmonary aspiration of gastric contents, especially while under general anesthesia. Dr. Liu in an interview said, "This did not occur". In a recent survey conducted by the U.K. Department of Health, where a liberal food intake policy in labor is common, only one case of fatal pulmonary aspiration occurred in 2 million deliveries, said Dr. Liu.

Hospitals and physician policies prohibiting women from eat during labor were established in the late 1940's out of fear of this potentially fatal complication. However, anesthesia during labor has changed dramatically in 50 years with few women under going general anesthesia.

It is time for change, we have known this information for more than 25 years, that we continue to prevent women from nutrition during labor is medieval." Says Dr. Marsden Wagner, author of '*Born in the USA: How a Broken Maternity System Must Be Fixed to Put Women and Children first.*' Dr. Wagner goes on to say "This is yet one more example that our society continues to treat a natural, normal process as a surgical event."

The extents to which this may help prevent other interventions such as vacuum, forceps or even cesarean delivery is unknown. “Anything that will help maintain a natural normal environment as opposed to a highly medicalized or artificial one will decrease women’s chances of a cesarean birth” says Tonya Jamois of International Cesarean Awareness Network. “This new study will allow doctors to be rest assured that eating helps rather than hinders the birth experience.” Say Tonya.

It’s astounding that in this day and age, there are hospitals, including major metropolitan areas, which still only allow women to have ice chips during labor. Change only happens with consumer demand. Women need to find their voice and speak with their care provider and hospital staff about their desire to eat during labor. Remember it’s your body, your baby, so when in labor, Let’s Eat!

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