

Food and liquids during labor

Eating and drinking during labor is important to keep the mother hydrated and nourished so she can stay energized for labor and birth. Digestion nearly stops completely during labor so most women do not want much food. Many women also feel nauseas and are sensitive to strong smells during labor. Try to help her drink at least 4 oz of fluid per hour (she needs at least 1 liter per hour if she is laboring in the water). Following are some suggestions that most women find tolerable and are good for keeping her hydrated and nourished.

Fluids:

Recharge – an electrolyte solution available at Natural Grocers. Most women like it watered down because the flavor can be too strong. Have several flavors available so she can choose what she likes best in labor.

O.N.E. juices – these are also available at Natural Grocers. Most women enjoy the flavor because it's mild and they provide lots of good minerals, carbohydrates and calories. O.N.E also makes plain tasting mineral water which would be a good choice as well.

Emergen-C – Vitamin and mineral packets available at most grocery stores. Many women like these fairly diluted. It is best to use these to replace electrolytes and minerals if a woman is not able to hold down fluids well rather than as the primary source of energy.

Water with salt and lime or lemon – you will have to adjust the amounts of each to her liking. This is one of the fastest ways to replace electrolytes and keep a mother hydrated.

Water with various fruit added tastes wonderful to some women. Some ideas are watermelon, cantaloupe, strawberries, cutie slices, pineapple, cucumber, etc.

Broth – some good choices are miso soup broth or plain chicken broth. This is another fast way to replace electrolytes.

Natural juices – again, most women like juices to be diluted. Stay away from citrus juices as these are not pleasant should she vomit during labor. Cherry juice is a good choice.

Water – if the mother can not tolerate anything else, water is a necessary part of keeping her hydrated. Some women can only have plain water once labor becomes active. There are many brands of mineral water which would be better for a laboring woman than tap water.

If weak and cannot stomach the idea of eating anything a spoonful of honey can be very helpful for helping a mom continue laboring.

Solid Foods:

Scrambled eggs

Plain whole wheat toast

Cut up apples

Mild cheese

Crackers

Frozen Grapes

*** Stay away from unnatural sugars such as candy or juices from concentrate. These sugars lower the pain tolerance for labor and do not provide sustained energy.

Labor Foods to eat while in labor:

- whole wheat/seed crackers
- graham crackers
- fruit such as grapes, melon, apple slices, or cuties
- granola bars
- fresh smoothies
- bananas/apples/celery with nut butter
- whole wheat/rice pasta
- miso soup/broth
- yogurt
- herbal tea, especially nettle and raspberry leaf
- natural white grape juice
- natural apple juice
- popsicles, preferably homemade with natural juices
- natural fruit juice (not orange juice)
- honey-sweetened tea frozen into ice cubes
- wholesome cereals
- brown rice
- cooked cereals: quinoa, millet or steel cut oats, cold soaked oats (in milk or water) are also great with some honey or maple syrup, almonds and cinnamon. Can be made ahead of time.
- scrambled or boiled egg
- applesauce
- MUST have electrolytes of some kind • Electrolytes such as Ultima, Dr Berg's, or other with measurable electrolytes (Smart water only contains trace electrolytes, Gatorade, Powerade, etc are often not good choices either because they are over processed and contain, dyes, lots of sugar and lots of salt)
- Ginger tea or ginger soda in case you are feeling nauseous
- Take a minute to think of what foods you like when you are not feeling great. Do you have a "go to"? What helped you through morning sickness? I could/would only eat tomato soup when I was a kid, but now I only want chicken noodle soup when sick. If you have something along those lines that you often choose, be sure and have that on hand for labor, for you may be feeling ill, or throwing up. In these cases you MUST STILL EAT DURING LABOR.