

Managing Birth Complications Without Equipment: A Holistic and Functional Medicine-Informed Approach

Informed by Mama Natural and functional medicine principles

1. Recognizing Postpartum Hemorrhage

- **Signs:** Heavy bleeding (soaking a pad in less than an hour), pale or clammy skin, dizziness, rapid breathing.
- **What to do:**
 - Encourage immediate breastfeeding to trigger oxytocin release.
 - Massage the uterus firmly through the abdomen.
 - Apply uterine compression.
 - Use shepherd's purse tincture or cayenne tincture if available.
- **Tools Needed:** Clean pads, herbal tinctures (shepherd's purse, cayenne), clean cloths, knowledge of fundal massage.

2. Supporting Prolonged Labor

- **Causes:** Malposition, fear, dehydration, exhaustion.
- **Supportive Measures:**
 - Hydrate with coconut water or honey-lemon water.
 - Encourage upright positions, hip circles, walking.
 - Use rebozo techniques or forward-leaning inversions.
 - Consider homeopathics like Caulophyllum or Gelsemium.

- **Tools Needed:** Rebozo cloth, hydration supplies, homeopathic remedies, birthing ball or supportive props.

3. Managing Maternal Shock

- **Signs:** Pale skin, cold sweat, confusion, shallow breathing.
- **Response:**
 - Lay mother flat, elevate feet.
 - Keep warm with blankets.
 - Reassure and speak calmly.
 - Treat bleeding if present.
- **Tools Needed:** Blankets, clean cloths, birth assistant, herbal hemostatics (if applicable).

4. Monitoring Vital Signs Without Tools

- **Pulse:** Use fingers on wrist or neck, count for 15 seconds \times 4.
- **Breathing:** Count breaths for 30 seconds \times 2.
- **Color:** Check lips/nail beds.
- **Consciousness:** Ensure alertness and clarity.
- **Tools Needed:** Watch or timer, visual assessment skills.

5. Coordinating with Community Health Resources

- Keep a referral list of clinics, emergency transport.
- Train birth partners in emergency roles.

- **Tools Needed:** Phone or radio, written list of emergency contacts, transport plan.

6. Aortic Compression

- Press down/in above the navel with a fist to slow uterine blood flow.
- Only as a last resort while arranging transfer.
- **Tools Needed:** Trained hands, physical strength, helper support.

7. Uterine Compression

- Massage the fundus until it becomes firm.
- Continue until bleeding slows.
- **Tools Needed:** Clean hands or gloves, training in technique.

8. Manual Removal of Placenta

- Only if trained. Use sterile gloves.
- Gently sweep between placenta and uterine wall.
- Refer if unsure or unsuccessful.
- **Tools Needed:** Sterile gloves, clean surface, strong light source.

9. Preventing Tears in Birth

- Use warm compresses on the perineum during crowning.
- Support perineum, avoid rushed pushing.
- Encourage instinctive pushing and perineal massage in late pregnancy.
- **Tools Needed:** Warm water, clean cloths, oil for massage.

10. Cord Around Neck (Nuchal Cord)

- If loose: Slip over head.
- If tight: Use somersault maneuver.
- Only cut if absolutely necessary.
- **Tools Needed:** Knowledge of maneuver, sterile scissors if cutting is required.

11. Stuck Shoulders (Shoulder Dystocia)

- Use McRoberts maneuver (knees to chest).
- Apply suprapubic pressure.
- Use Gaskin maneuver (hands-and-knees).
- **Tools Needed:** Space for positioning, physical support from birth assistants.

12. The Breech Birth

- Do not interfere during descent.
- Deliver body, lift to release arms, assist head gently.
- **Tools Needed:** Patience, calm guidance, support for hands-off technique.

13. Danger Signs After Birth

- Fever, foul-smelling discharge, red/swollen breasts, leg pain, vision changes.
- Refer immediately. Use herbal support if safe.
- **Tools Needed:** Thermometer if available, observational skills, herbal remedies.

14. The Birth, Labor, Delivery, and Early Postpartum

- Keep the lighting dim, and the atmosphere calm.
- Promote skin-to-skin, delayed cord clamping, breastfeeding.
- **Tools Needed:** Clean blankets, warm towels, safe and quiet space.

15. Managing the Third Stage of Labor

- Watch for signs of placental separation.
- Encourage squatting or bearing down.
- Use breastfeeding and massage.
- **Tools Needed:** Clean surface, knowledge of signs, calm environment.

16. Birthing the Baby

- Support instinctive positions.
- Allow fetal ejection reflex.
- Avoid rushing crowning.
- **Tools Needed:** Hands-off awareness, encouragement, clean linens.

17. Managing the Second Stage of Labor

- Encourage rest until baby descends.
- Use upright/squatting positions.
- Avoid directed pushing.
- **Tools Needed:** Birthing stool or supportive props, comfort aids.

18. Immoderate Care After Birth

- Avoid unnecessary intervention.
- Support natural bonding and recovery.
- **Tools Needed:** Skin-to-skin support, knowledge of physiological norms.

19. Giving Good Care in Labor

- Be calm and confident.
- Support pain relief naturally.
- Encourage movement, warmth, and emotional support.
- **Tools Needed:** Warm packs, herbal teas, birth affirmations, continuous support.

True midwifery is guided by nature, supported by traditional knowledge and holistic tools. Even in low-resource settings, a prepared birth worker can make a powerful difference.