

Just going to say it, yes, you'll probably poop during labour!

What worries a mum more than pushing a 6-to-8-pound person out of her vagina? Pooping at the very same time!! Just going to say it..... You will probably poop during labour! It's 100 percent normal (and common) to poop while you're pushing out your baby.

So stop worrying mumma! Here's what you need to know about the pushing-and-pooping connection.

Why do we poop during labour?

There's a simple reason: The very same muscles that you engage when you're having a bowel motion, are the same ones you use when you're pushing and also signals you are using the right muscles to push. Plus, when you're in labour, you have extra pressure on your colon and rectum from the weight of the baby moving through your vagina. It's the perfect recipe for pooping during labour. During labour, the presenting part of the baby (usually the head) that's leading the way through the vagina, presses the stretch receptors in the colon, stimulating the sacral nerve and sending the message to your brain that you need to poop. This doesn't usually occur until your baby is very low, but certain fetal positions such as breech (when the baby is positioned bottom or feet first), may cause this nerve to be stimulated prematurely.

There is also the fetal ejection reflex, caused by pressure on the cervix and vagina, which causes a desire to push. The combination of these factors results in the bearing down and relaxing of the anal sphincter, which helps bring down baby and any stool that's in the rectum. It's usually just a little poop. Adding to your poop probability: prostaglandins. These hormones are naturally involved in normal bowel function and they're also the main hormones implicated in the initiation of labour. In fact, some prostaglandins are used to induce labour.

Can I prevent this?

Not really. You might naturally have a bowel movement before the final stage of labour which may reduce the amount of stool in your colon that would come out while pushing. Listen to your body and if you feel like you need to have a bowel motion, check with your LMC and if she gives you the thumbs up, go for it.

Maybe your own mother or grandmother told you she was spared the "indignity" of pooping during childbirth by being given an enema to clear their bowels before labour (or maybe you've seen it on *Call the Midwife*). But this practice, while standard in generations past, is no longer considered helpful or necessary. In fact, the routine use of enemas during labour is now discouraged, according to a 2013 Cochrane review, which is a systematic review of several studies on the subject, it reported that these types of enemas didn't show benefit to laboring women (pew, they can make things so messy!!).

What will my LMC think?!

Ummm, that you're normal! Seriously!! They know that it's just a fact of life and part of the whole process. What usually concerns LMC's more than poop, is that the fear and worry of pooping can inhibit you from pushing effectively. Resisting that urge, or trying to fight what your body is naturally doing, can make the pushing part of birth particularly miserable, and may even increase the time of pushing! I understand that people may be worried about pooping in front of their partner or what their partner or family members will think, but your body will eventually have the **uncontrollable urge to push**, so you can't be inhibited forever and it will be so much easier to push! There's a lot going on down there during labour and it's not a big deal, your LMC will discreetly clean anything up and will be secretly thinking 'Yes, she's pushing in the right place'.



It's good for your baby! What?

Yep, you read that right! pooping during labour might help babies develop their microbiome, the bacteria that lives on and in people, which helps with everything from digestion to being able to fight off colds. Newborn babies do not have a microbiome as they are born with a sterile gut. - they don't have any bacteria in the large intestine,

As your baby travels through your vaginal they are exposed to your bacteria. When mom poops, baby can pick up this important gut bacteria. One bacteria babies once received from their mums is *B. infantis*, which defends against harmful bacteria, such as *E. coli*, *Staphylococcus* or *Streptococcus*. This is a great kickstart for babies during their first six months of life for developing their immune system.

Let's stop apologising for pooping while giving life to another human.

It's no joke that pregnant women, especially when it's their first, are genuinely afraid of pooping during labour. Even in the throes of pushing, some women become embarrassed and will start profusely apologizing, Stop right there, firstly don't apologise for something your body is naturally doing and secondly, stop focusing on pooping and start focusing on pushing in your bum so you can birth your baby.

As I mentioned earlier, some may feel most ashamed in front of the birthing team, others can't bear to think about their partners seeing them poop, partners like to joke around, but partners, take note: It is not OK to ever, ever tease a woman about what may, or may not happen in that birthing room, or any of the dirty details. If your partner can't handle what they might see, they need to stay away from where all the action is happening. Gently remind them, they will be missing out on seeing their baby come into this world for the sake of a little poop! They are going to be seeing a lot more once they start changing nappies anyway!

Poop happens. Move on.

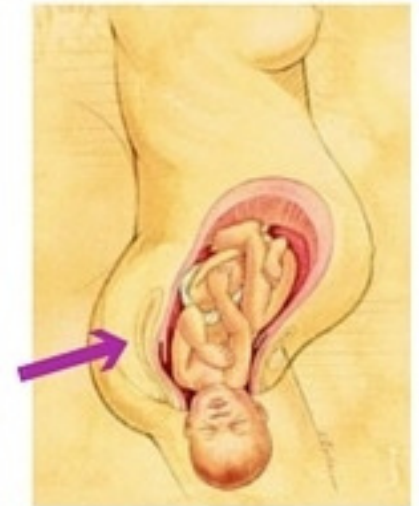
Yes! You might poop during birth.
Here's why:



Pre-labor rectum



Active labor rectum



Pushing/birth rectum