Emergency Guide For FreeBirth: Resuscitation

*This guide is intended to be a very limited, yet accurate, quick read for mothers planning on having an unassisted birth or preparing for the possibility of their midwife not making it. There are many things to know in order to assess certain situations, this is NOT a suitable substitute for Midwifery training.

The Most Likely Emergency: My Baby Is Not Breathing

After your baby is born they may take a few seconds to begin to cry or breathe. This is normal, but if it happens, you want to be paying attention to your baby’s TONE and COLOR. It is best for your baby to begin to turn pink and start to move their limbs within seconds after birth, shortly after this they should be making efforts to breathe and their color and tone should be continuously improving on a second to second basis. If this is not the case for your baby, it is time to take action and help your baby. *It is widely accepted that babies can take up to 10 minutes to learn to breathe but this is not what is best or least stressful for your baby. The baby who is not doing it on their own is asking for help. It is the most loving thing to just help your baby breathe so that they do not have to feel scared or stressed directly after their birth.*

First, make sure your baby’s face is dry and their airway is open by assuring that their body is straight and the chin is not tucked down to the chest.

Next, place your mouth over your baby’s mouth and nose, making sure you have a good seal and no air will escape out the sides of your mouth. Gently push a steady amount of air into the lungs. *Note: the first step to inflating a baby’s lungs is to force the fluid through the tissues. This will take more force than you might think for a tiny baby. Continue adding pressure until you can feel the fluid moving and the lungs opening.*
Give your baby five full and slow inflation breaths to the count of “one one thousand, two one thousand, three, release!” If you suspect five breaths did not go in, continue trying until you are sure you have a good seal and five full breaths absolutely went into your baby, regardless of your baby's initial response to the first couple of attempts. Do not stop until you have assured your baby received all five breaths. It does not harm a healthy baby to receive breaths, it does harm a struggling baby to not receive enough breaths.

Reassess; By this time your baby should be making a great turnaround. See that your baby’s color has greatly improved and they are now acting like a normal newborn (breathing, crying, pink, active, etc.) If this is not the case it is necessary to move on to the next steps, Ventilation Breaths.

Ventilate the baby by giving shorter, lighter breaths to the count of “breathe” then release for “two, three” blow for “breathe” release for “two, three”. Do this for either for about 10 breaths or until your baby is better.

If by now your baby is not coming around, call 911 and continue working on your baby with next steps.

Check baby’s heart rate; listen for six seconds and multiply the number by 10. If your baby’s heart rate is below 60 beats per minute, continue on to chest compressions. Do three compressions and then one breath. Make sure to reassess after about 30 seconds of chest compressions and only continue if the baby’s heart is still below 60. If baby is still not breathing affectively and the heart rate has risen above 60, stop chest compressions and continue ventilation breaths until help arrives. It is a good idea to begin practicing counting heart beats during your pregnancy so that you are used to doing it if you need to during a high pressure scenario.
The following is a quick reference, assuming the baby is not transitioning well on their own. Remember, helping baby breathe is the kind thing to do and will do no harm, even if it wasn’t needed.

**STEP ONE**: Assess tone, color, and respiratory efforts.

**STEP TWO**: Give FIVE FULL inflation breaths “one one thousand, two one thousand, three, release!”

**STEP THREE**: Re-Assess. No improvement, move on to step four. Improvement, place baby skin to skin and begin bonding.

**STEP FOUR**: Begin Ventilation Breaths “breathe…(release) two three” Do not stop until **10 ventilations** have gone in.

**STEP FIVE**: Assess heart rate. Below 60, move on to step six and call 911. Above 60 but still not breathing well, go back to step four.

**STEP SIX**: Lay baby flat on the floor, making sure the chin is not tucked *(it will take two people to perform this step. One person to hold baby’s head in position.)* Give **three chest compressions** and one ventilation breath, repeat 10 times and go back to step five.