

Working together with.....

....for a harmonious labour and birth

In late pregnancy

...Your mind and body...

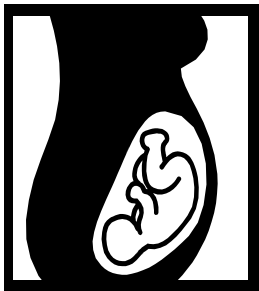
Preparing your mind (knowledge and emotionally) and body during pregnancy will help you work towards a more comfortable labour and satisfying birth experience.

Attending an antenatal class is one step in your preparation, other steps may be:

- Looking at the various options available and writing a birth plan, this will help prepare you and your birth partner for the unexpected and help you adjust your expectations if circumstances change.
- Openly confronting any fears and anxieties you and your birth partner may have about labour and birth will help you avoid falling into the *Fear- Tension and Pain cycle*.
- Relaxation involves more than just a relaxed body it also implies an open and relaxed your mind. Regular practice of relaxation will improve your wellbeing, build yours and your birth partners confidence in your ability to focus and relax during labour and allow you to let go of fears and inhibitions (thus increasing the oxytocin in your body and reducing adrenaline).
- Gentle exercise (swimming, walking) and pregnancy yoga are great ways to increase physical strength, stamina and flexibility for labour and birth. It can also provide some time out for you to focus on yourself and on your baby.



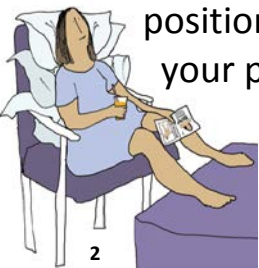
...Your baby...



...is not a 'passive passenger' but 'an active participant' Jean Sutton

Each baby, pregnancy, labour and birth is unique but your body and baby instinctively know how to give birth and be born. The majority of babies will get into good position (head down with their backs towards your front – the optimal foetal position) for birth in the last week(s) of pregnancy while others need some help and encouragement.

Either way practising upright, forward-leaning and open positions (UFO) in late pregnancy *may* help maximise the space in your pelvis and encourage your baby to get into a good position for birth. Other helpful positions include: tilting forwards when sitting with the help of pillows, kneeling on all fours, walking possible and sleeping on your side.



If your baby is breech (sitting upright or lying across) you may find positions and exercises set out on the www.spinningbabies.com website and the book '*Breech Birth*' by Benna Waites (2003) useful.



Latent phase (First stage) of Labour

...Your environment...

In this early phase of your labour **possible can give you and your time to work with your hormones, baby and body to help your labour progress.**



staying at home for as long as birth partner the space, comfort and time to work with your hormones, baby and body to help your labour progress.

Your home provides you with lots of opportunities to relax and distract yourself from focusing only on the contractions. For example...



– Use your bathroom to take a warm bath or shower (this can ease the discomfort and pain of contractions).



– Carry on normal activities such as cooking, eating and

drinking. Drinking and eating during labour is important because it increases your energy levels and prevents hunger from causing your body to produce adrenaline which can stop or slow down your labour.

– Enjoy the comforts of your livingroom



by watching a movie or read, rest

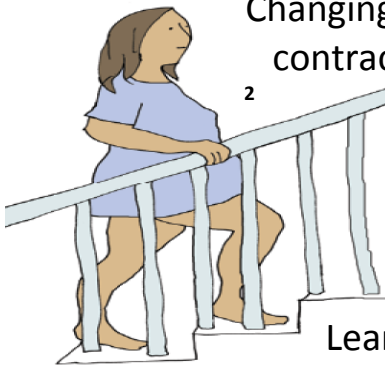
inbetween contractions, have a walk outside, around and helps you (and your birth partner) feel calm, comfortable and relaxed.



...Discomfort and pain...

Changing positions and movement in labour can help you deal with contractions and ease any discomfort and/or pain you may be feeling.

Remember each contraction you feel means your one step closer to meeting your baby.



Using a birth ball allows you to practice different *UFO* positions and movement at the same time. ²

Leaning on a birth ball allows you to rest, use a TENS machine and rock your pelvis from side to side. At the same time your birth partner can optimise your comfort and encourage relaxation by massaging or applying a heated pad/water bottle to your lower back. This will help to increase the levels of oxytocin and endorphins in your body.



...Your birth partner...

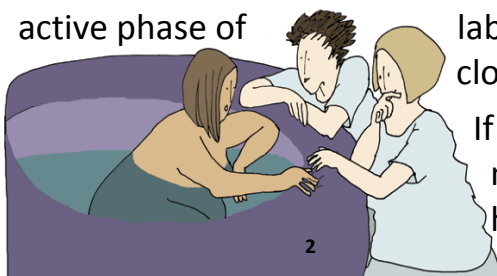


Emotions can be contagious. If you are overly anxious your birth partner is likely to feel the same. Therefore practicing relaxation (and positions) is important for the birth partner too and practicing these together is even better. Throughout labour and birth it is also important for your birth partner to look after his/her own comfort and needs (food, drink and rest). This benefits him/her and you as it will mean that they will be able to support you throughout your labour and birth.

Active phase of labour (First stage) and birth of..... (Second stage)

...Your environment...

Your environment is likely to change (if it has not already done so) when you reach the active phase of labour (cervix is 3-4cms dilated and your contractions are closer together and more regular).



If you're having a homebirth you may be joined by your midwife alternatively this is the time that will be going into hospital or a birth centre. During this change in environment your adrenaline levels may rise and your labour may slow

down or stop. It is therefore important to work with your new environment to create an atmosphere of calm and relaxation to allow your oxytocin and endorphin levels to increase again.

Dimming the lights, playing relaxing music, using a birth pool, the support of your birth partner may help you feel calm and relaxed.

...Gravity ...

Using

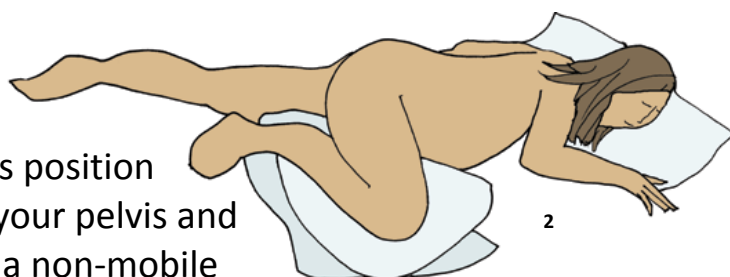
Using UFO positions and movement during the active stage can help shorten

Upright **your labour.** UFO positions work with gravity, allowing your baby to get into a position that applies pressure to and encourages your cervix to dilate.

Forward-leaning

Open

Positions can really help your birth.



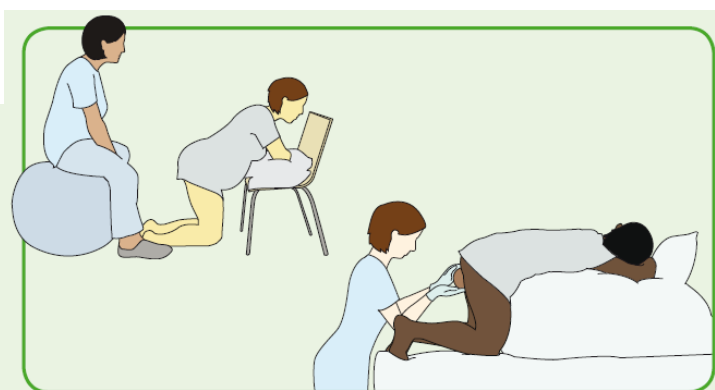
If possible avoid lying on your back as this position can restrict the movement and space of your pelvis and slows the progress of labour. If you have a non-mobile epidural or need to rest or for any other reason lying down on your side with one leg supported by pillows or your birth partner or midwife allows for some movement in your pelvis.

There are also many other restful and comfortable positions so try as many as you need too.

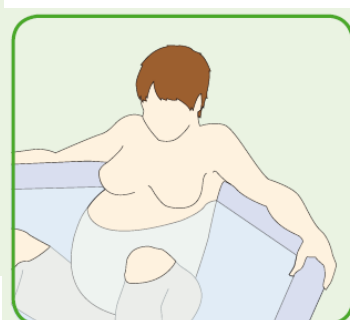


UFO positions will also assist you in birthing your baby.

Follow your instincts as to what position(s) to take, after all your body knows what to do.



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Birth your placenta (Third Stage)



After giving birth your uterus may rest for a few minutes before starting contractions again to enable you to birth your placenta. The length of time it takes and how you birth your placenta will depend on your chosen delivery method: active management or physiological/natural third stage.

Skin-to-skin contact with your baby and breastfeeding soon after birth helps maintain high levels of oxytocin, is a great way to bond with your baby and gets your contractions going again.

Similar upright position, such as kneeling, squatting, using a birth stool or chair, will help your body work with gravity to birth your placenta.



Further Information

....Books...

- ❖ *'Conception, pregnancy and birth'* by Dr Miriam Stoppard (2008)
- ❖ *'Breathe your way through birth with yoga'* by Julie Llewellyn-Thomas (2007)
- ❖ *'Breech Birth'* by Benna Waites (2003)
- ❖ *'How will I be born, what babies wish their mothers to know'* by Jean Sutton.
(Available from <http://optimal-foetal-positioning.co.nz>)

....Articles and information booklets...

- ❖ 'Pain in labour: Your hormones are your little helpers' by Dr Sarah Buckley (Available from <http://www.sarahbuckley.com/pain-in-labour-your-hormones-are-your-helpers/>)
- ❖ 'Straightforward birth' by NCT (Available from http://www.nct.org.uk/sites/default/files/related_documents/Straightforward%20birth_3.pdf)
- ❖ 'Positions for labour and birth' by NCT (Available from http://www.nct.org.uk/sites/default/files/related_documents/NCT%20Positions%20labour%20birth_3.pdf)

....Websites...

- ❖ NCT - www.nct.org.uk (All photos marked with a 1)
- ❖ The Royal College of Midwives, Campaign for Normal Birth - www.rcmnormalbirth.org.uk
This contains clips demonstrating positions to take during labour and birth. (Photos 2)
- ❖ Babycentre – www.babycentre.co.uk
- ❖ Spinningbabies - www.spinningbabies.com