



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Advice and birthing positions during Labour

Issued by Physiotherapy Department

This leaflet gives advice and position suggestions that may help you during your labour and delivery.

The process of labour

Understanding the process of labour and practising how you can help yourself during the different stages of labour can boost your confidence and help you cope.

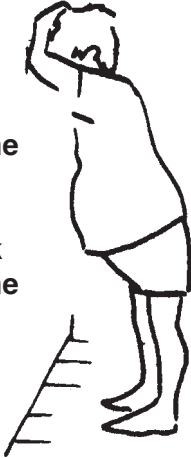
First stage

This is the 'opening up' stage, when your contractions dilate (open) your cervix (neck of the womb) to allow your baby to be born; it is normal for this to feel uncomfortable or painful.

Moving around is encouraged in early labour, whether you are at home or in hospital. An upright, leaning forward position is particularly beneficial. It will help you feel more comfortable and encourage your labour to progress.

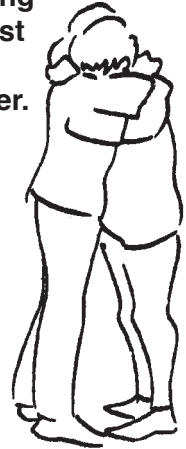
The following positions will help when you are having contractions and when you are resting:

Standing, leaning forwards against the wall, or leaning your back against the wall with feet well apart.



Sitting against a table relaxing forward, or sitting, facing backwards on a chair.

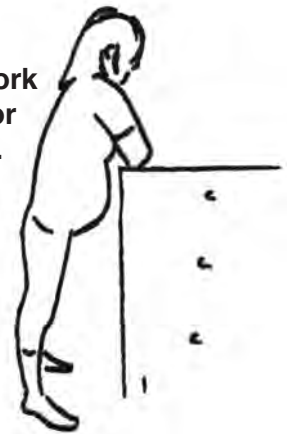
Leaning against your partner.



Kneeling against a chair piled with pillows or a bean bag, relaxing forward.

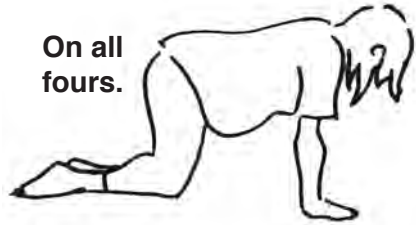


Leaning forward over a work surface or furniture.





**Sitting
on a
birth ball
or chair.**



**On all
fours.**

**Rocking or circling
your hips and pelvis in
one of the forward
positions can help
ease the pain of labour
in your back.**



**Sitting, using your partner for
support.**

Your birthing partner can help by:

- massaging your back
- encouraging you to relax and breathe calmly
- suggesting a change of position
- giving you emotional support and encouragement
- offering sips of water
- cooling your face with a fan or wet flannel.

Remember to mention any problems you may have had during your pregnancy with your pelvis, back, hips or knees, particularly if you choose to have an epidural.

Start each contraction with a long, sighing breath out and keep relaxed with rhythmical, easy breathing, sighing out slowly throughout the contraction.

As the contraction builds up, breathing alters, becoming faster and shallower. If you feel you are about to tense up, especially at the peak of the contraction, switch to gentle, rhythmic blowing at an imaginary candle flame, to let it flicker but not blow out (your partner can encourage you with this).

Have a long, sighing breath at the end of each contraction. Check your body for any remaining tension, so that you can start the next contraction fully relaxed.

T.E.N.S. (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) – can be used throughout labour to relieve pain.

Other pain relief – Your Midwife will guide you.

Second stage

Now that your cervix is fully dilated you can actively push your baby out.

Listen to your body and work with the normal desire to push. Adopt a comfortable position and work with this urge. Sometimes the urge to push is felt before the cervix has become fully dilated – your midwife may ask you to pant or change position to relieve this.

Here are some helpful positions for second stage:

Breathe gently in and out as the contraction starts and when the urge overwhelms you, tuck your chin in and bear down towards your bottom. Keep your pelvic floor relaxed.

High kneeling



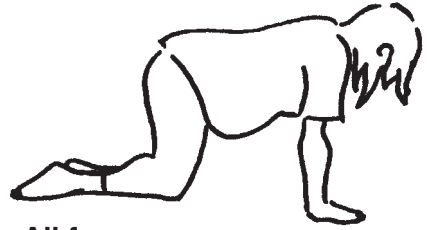
Try to keep your face relaxed and don't prolong the breath hold – sometimes a groan or grunt will help when you push! There will be several pushes in one contraction.

Side lying





High sitting



All fours

As your baby's head is about to emerge, work with your midwife to control the speed of delivery. This will help protect the pelvic floor. You will do this by alternately pushing and panting.

Third stage

During the third stage the placenta (afterbirth) is delivered.

After your baby is born

Your pelvic floor muscles (birth canal) and abdominal muscles will have been weakened by pregnancy and childbirth. Starting to exercise these muscles gently can help to relieve soreness as well as regaining strength. You will be given a post natal exercise leaflet relevant to your delivery before you leave hospital.

Contact Numbers

North Tyneside General Hospital 03 44 811 8111, ext. 34064

Wansbeck General Hospital 03 44 811 8111, ext. 36010

Hexham General Hospital 03 44 811 8111, ext. 35032

Alnwick Infirmary 03 44 811 8111, ext. 6749

Berwick Infirmary 03 44 811 8111, ext. 6643

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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