

**WE HAVE
PAIN RELIEF
OPTIONS!**



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NATURAL PAIN RELIEF IN LABOUR



Nearly all mothers experience some level of pain in the process of childbirth, and mothers and their partners are understandably concerned about it. this booklet provide you with a number of safe and effective pain relief techniques.

Managing your pain

Preparing for labour and birth

Preparation is the key to success for any new venture in life and labour and birth is no different. One of the biggest concerns women have is the fear associated with labour and delivery. Managing fears before you actually go into labour can increase your ability to cope with labour in a positive way.

A planned coping strategy should be started at home, on your journey to the hospital and continued at the hospital. The following information provides a virtual toolbox to assist you throughout your labour. Practice one or few methods to maximize pain relief.

Antenatal classes

The best way to overcome any fears is to attend Kaust Health antenatal classes. The aim of these active birth workshops is to help you and your partner(s) understand labour and birth and develop coping strategies to help you have a positive birth experience. Also presenting a great opportunity to meet other women in KAUST like yourself who are on the journey to parenthood. If you prefer you can arrange a one to one classes with the OB educator.

Natural Methods/ Non pharmacological

It is important to remember that “pain” associated with labour does not mean that anything is wrong. Pain is a normal part of labour, however experiencing pain can lead to fear. It is recognized that when a woman has a lot of fear she may tense up, over breath and as a consequence her level of discomfort is increased.

All the following methods described can be used alone or in conjunction with one another to deal with the fear response which is activated by the sympathetic nervous system (autonomic nervous system) more commonly known as the “fight or flight mechanism.” Fear and anxiety produces adrenaline which diverts energy to the arms and legs to assist “fight or flight” but do not help labour at all. The system that balances this is the parasympathetic nervous system. The hormone released is oxytocin sometimes known as the “love hormone” it is secreted into the bloodstream by the posterior pituitary gland.

Oxytocin is controlled by a positive feedback mechanism where release of the hormone causes an action which stimulates more of its own release.

When contraction of the uterus starts, oxytocin is released which stimulates more contractions and more oxytocin to be emitted. In this way, contractions increase in intensity and frequency. Therefore making labour more efficient as well as promoting maternal child bonding at delivery.

When fears are stimulated during the birth process, due to the feelings of intense pain adrenaline is released into the blood stream. Once adrenaline is release, before the second stage of labour, the body then struggles to produce the required oxytocin to keep contractions going with the subsequent production of endorphins our pleasure seeking hormones and natural opiates. However there are many ways of breaking the fear - tension - pain cycle without the use of medication.



1- Staying upright and active during labour and birth.

Instinctively a woman in labour wants to adopt upright and mobile positions, as she is more comfortable like this. The benefits of walking around keeps you more at ease, helps your labour progress more efficiently making it shorter as the natural effects of gravity are maximized. Remaining upright allows for maximum space to be achieved in the pelvis so your baby's passage is easier and lets maximum oxygen reach your baby during labour and birth.

During pregnancy the hormone relaxin is produced that softens the ligaments of the body making you more supple and flexible. The pelvic ligaments are softened in preparation for childbirth particularly after 37 weeks of pregnancy. You may find it easier to adopt certain positions than before so be careful not to strain.

Consequently it is important to change positions from time to time. Tune in to your body alternating between activity and rest and what feels right and comfortable. Practice active birth positions during pregnancy. Joining a Pilates or yoga class will help. Ideally your birth partner should practice birth positions with you, especially the supportive positions in the chair and squatting.

Tips on encouraging a straightforward birth during labour | NCT
www.nct.org.uk › Birth

2- Breathing techniques for labour and birth

Breathing techniques can act as a diversion from the intensity of your contractions. The techniques are used ideally in conjunction with the relaxation/ visualization techniques as the first line in pain relief.

During pregnancy cultivate an awareness of your breathing by focusing and spending some time every day practicing breathing deeply.

When you are tense and frightened you have a tendency to over breathe or hold your breath. This is a common reaction to any stressful stimulus and the aim of learning breathing techniques is to concentrate, focusing on the exhalation breath so carbon dioxide is expelled efficiently. Preventing the tingling in the fingers and feelings of panic.

Firstly find a comfortable place where you cannot be disturbed. Close your eyes for a moment and focus on your breathing. You will notice your breathing pattern is rhythmical. You breathe in, and then there is a slight pause before you breathe out. Your inhalation and exhalation are of the same length and depth. In labour, you want to keep your breathing rhythmical. It is important not to let the in breath become longer than the out breathe. In fact the out breathe should be slightly longer.

Practice this by placing your hands on your lower abdomen and Inhale through your nose and fill your abdomen with air. Exhale slowly through your mouth so that the breath is long and even. This helps to stop you're breathing from becoming too shallow which can be inevitable when you are having strong contractions.

This is okay as long as your respirations do not get too fast which can turn into panic breathing. Think of the word "RELAX". It has two syllables "RE" and "LAX". Counting each breath in and out or thinking RE on inhalation and LAX on exhalation helps. Focusing on the exhalations helps to let go of tension and concentrates the mind on "breathing the pain away". Sing or sigh low tones on exhalation or use sounds of your choice.

The other important breathing tip is to practice "panting or dog breathing" these quick fast exhalations are a useful tool for coping with the peak of the contraction and during the second stage when the head is being born and the doctor wants you to try and slow the forceful expulsive pushes of the second stage. The head can deliver slowly this assists in prevention of perineal trauma.

You and your partner will benefit practicing breathing together so during labour your partner can remind you, so together you will stay calm and in control.

You can learn these specialized breathing and relaxation techniques. NHS VIDEOS | How can I use breathing exercises during labour

www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/how-can-i-use-breathing-exercise-during-labour.aspx

3- Massage for labour

Massage is very comforting for women in labour and is most effective when performed by your birth partner(s). Practice of course in pregnancy will make perfect. Massage therapy has been demonstrated to be very effective during pregnancy, and particularly helpful for muscular aching and cramps. Women who received massage therapy reported decreased depression, anxiety, and leg and back pain. In one study of labour pain, women who received massage therapy experienced significantly less pain, and their labors were on average 3 hours shorter with less need for medication.

Some suggest that the beneficial effects of massage can be explained by the 'gate control theory'. This proposes that pressure sensations from massage travel more rapidly to the brain than pain signals, therefore closing the gate to the pain message, influencing the autonomic nervous system to decrease cortisol secretion. Nurturing touch provides emotional support and reassurance, decreases anxiety and fear helping a woman to relax.

This emotional support increases oxytocin levels, reduces blood pressure, and has a sedative effect helping women manage contractions more easily, decreasing the requirement for oxytocin augmentation. This nurturing touch increases her level of satisfaction with her birth, giving the partner and support team specific ways to feel useful and improving a woman's experience.

Practice different massage techniques, and find a few that work for you! Such as sacral pressure massage, circular hip massage and hand or foot massage. However be aware that some women find massage so helpful that they want their partners to keep rubbing their backs for hours on end! The masseur will need a break or a replacement. On the other hand some women cannot bear to be touched during contractions and the extra stimulus is more than they can cope with. Birth companions need to be aware of these different reactions and respond accordingly.

Massage in labour - BabyCentre www.babycentre.co.uk > Pregnancy > Labour and birth

4- Hypnobirthing.

Using self-hypnosis in labour is increasingly popular. There is some evidence to suggest that this mind-body technique may help with the pain and discomfort of labour. Women who decide to use hypnosis usually start practicing in pregnancy with their partners who also learn these techniques to support them through the labour process. Hypnobirthing does not guarantee perfection or a pain free delivery but is practiced to ensure a positive outlook even if complications arise. Releasing fears and anxieties especially if previous deliveries were difficult or if you have negative beliefs of childbirth. Helps to build self-control and faith in your body's natural ability. Visualization exercises you practice ensure you feel grounded, serene and positive.

Hypnobirthing uses a different vocabulary to describe events, for example contractions are called "surges", the medical words are substituted for words that have a more positive meaning or context.

The techniques learned can help support the emotional changes of pregnancy and there is some evidence to suggest it may help with pregnancy anxieties

More information can be found at:

-1 hypnobirthing mp3 downloads and mini course hypnobirthing
hypnobirthingdownloads.com

-2 Free Hypnobirthing freehypnobirthing.com/free_hypnobirthing.html

5- Using water for labor and birth.

Using warm water is a great strategy for coping with contractions. The warm sensations of the water on your skin will help you cope better with contractions and provides significant pain relief. The water supports and relaxes the body and the tissues giving you more freedom to move and feelings of control. The buoyancy and freedom from gravity's pull helps you maintain upright yet relaxed positions and you generally labour faster in warm water as a result. Floating in water can decrease feelings of anxiety and stress and reduce blood pressure. This helps enormously to make you feel more comfortable, relaxed and calm. The soothing effects of the warm water stimulates your body to produce endorphins your body's own natural painkiller and less likely to secrete stress related hormones. Scientifically Proven to reduce the requirement for pain relieving medications, interventions and lower caesarean section rates.

Use water in conjunction with breathing and visualization exercises for maximum impact. Ask your service provider if they encourage use of water at their facility or if they have a pool room?

For more information:

- Water birth Information www.waterbirth.org/waterbirth-information

6- Birth Visualization

Visualization uses the power of your own imagination to create images in your mind that focus on the positive progression and safe delivery of your baby.

Visualizing your birth will help you prepare emotionally for viewing birth as a normal healthy event. When practicing your breathing techniques and fully mentally relaxed start to think of images that work for you.

You will use your mind as huge visual display unit to relay pictures that you can focus on each time a contraction comes.

Some women focus on a flower slowly unfolding: Look at a flower or imagine a flower the petals slowly opening and unfolding, like your vagina and perineum. Imagine a circle representing full dilation of the cervix and imagine the baby descending and rotating down through the circle and entering the outside world. Some women use colour imagery, picturing blue for calm and or yellow for relaxation. Play soothing music to enhance your mood and sense of well-being. There are many free visual meditation specifically designed to assist your positive imagination. Try a few to find one that suits you.

-1 Meditation to Manage Pain during Labor | Explore Meditation
www.exploremeditation.com/meditation-manage-pain-labor

7-Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation (TENS)

TENS should be commenced at home or the beginning of labour for it to be most effective, as the effect is cumulative. It works by sending gentle electrical currents from a small battery powered device through four flat probes placed on your back.

This creates a tingling feeling which you can control the strength of and boost during a contraction. Effectiveness can also be attributed to the gate control theory of pain relief. Sensory signals from the TENS reach the brain prior to the pain signal from the contraction, causing descending pathways from the brain to close the gate diminishing pain perception. The other theory is that TENS works by helping to release your body's own endorphins and the effect increases the longer you use it. The other benefits are that its use does not stop you from moving or assuming various labour positions. Especially effective for lower back pain and in between water/pool time. There are no harmful effects on either you or the baby. Remember to purchase an obstetric TENS machine and they can be sourced over the internet. 'Mama TENS' digital maternity machine for pain relief during labour is on eBay and amazon.

-1 Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation for Labor
<https://www.verywell.com/transcutaneous-electrical-nerve>

POSITIONS FOR LABORING OUT OF BED

WALKING, STANDING AND LEANING



- All may help simulate effective contractions.
- All use gravity to help baby's descent

KNEELING



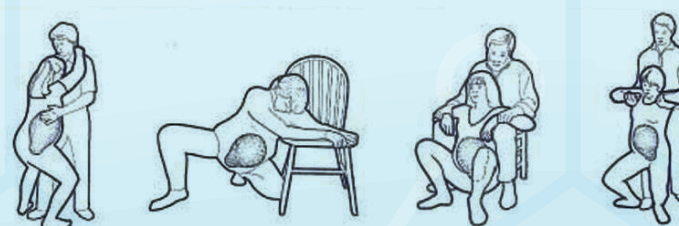
- May relieve back pain.
- Helps baby rotate to most favorable position: occiput anterior (OA).
- Relieves hemorrhoids

SITTING



- Uses gravity to help baby's descent.
- Allows rest between contractions.

SQUATTING



- Uses gravity to help baby's descent.
- Opens pelvis to provide more room