

POSITIONS DURING LABOUR AND BIRTH



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Positions during labour

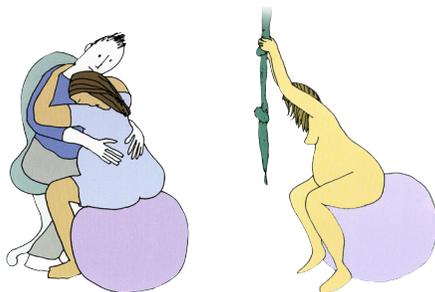
Gravity is the greatest aid in giving birth, but for historical reasons (now obsolete) in this society we now make women give birth on their backs. This resource can be used to help women understand and practice alternative positions antenatally, feel free to be mobile and try different positions during labour and birth.”
– Royal College of Midwives

The key to using positions and movement in labour is to listen to your body so you can move and rest as you need to and to get yourself as comfortable as possible.

Get comfortable and let your body do what it needs to do

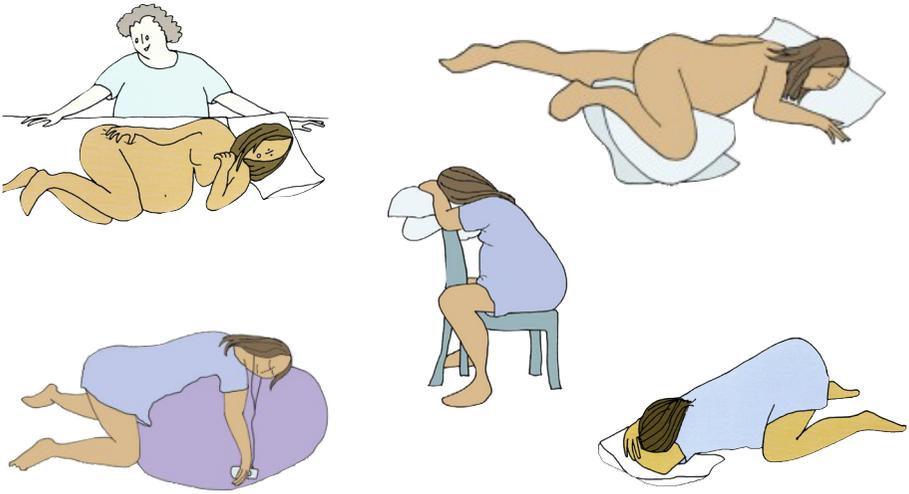
Wherever you are labouring it is a good idea to keep on the move in the run up to giving birth. During labour, it is best to change positions as there are several benefits in helping you deal with the contractions, encouraging the baby through the birth canal in the best position and encouraging a straightforward birth. Try these techniques:

- Rocking or Swaying your hips
- Walking
- Going up and down stairs
- Hip stretches
- All 4's rocking
- Using a birth ball, which helps you remain upright and mobile
- Duck walk
- Squatting- half squats/ full squats
- Butterfly exercise
- Lunging
- Sitting reverse on a chair



For support you can lean on someone or use a chair, a bed or a sling. If you want to move about you can lean on someone for support or you might want to lean into the wall.

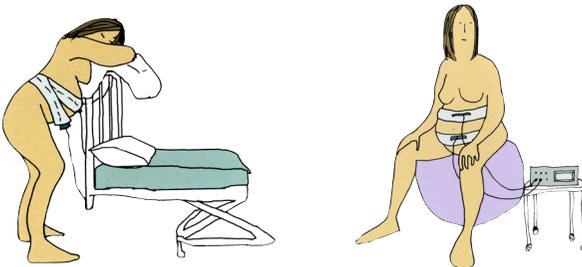
Positions to rest and conserve your energy



It is important to conserve your energy in labour – so if you want to rest, find a position which helps you feel as comfortable as possible. If it is comfy to lie down – do that for a while. Otherwise you may need to find positions where your whole body can be supported so you can rest.

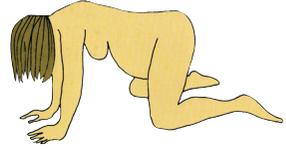
If your baby is being monitored

If your baby is being continuously monitored, you don't need to stay on the bed. It is just as important to use positions to stay comfortable and to encourage your body to do what it needs to do to contract well. You can still monitor your baby in these positions.



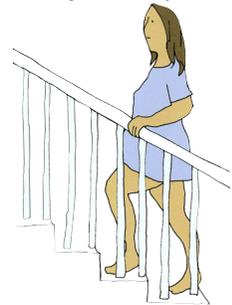
Other useful positions

If you have had an epidural and you need to stay on the bed – use gravity by sitting as upright as you can to keep you comfortable and to help your baby move down through the pelvis. You can also lie on your side lateral position and use a pillow or peanut ball between your legs. You can also sit on a chair and use the back to rest.



If you need to squat, you may need to be supported by someone or you may need to hold on to a chair or the bed.

It can be useful to walk up and down some stairs if your contractions have slowed down or if your baby is not quite in the right position – the movement and being upright will encourage contractions and will enable your baby to turn into a better position for labour and birth. These lunges can also help turn the baby to a better position.



Cochrane review by Lawrence et al (2009) concluded that upright positions and walking in labour are associated with a reduction in the length of the first stage of labour and the use of epidural analgesia. Upright positions in the first stage are those that avoid lying flat, and may include walking around. Upright positions in the second stage include sitting (more than 45 degrees from the horizontal), squatting or kneeling, and being on hands and knees. Use of upright positions for the second stage of labour have been found to have several benefits including a shorter second stage, fewer instrumental births and fewer episiotomies.

Reference : Campaign for Normal Birth, Getting off the bed www.rcmnormalbirth.org.uk

Illustrations courtesy Royal College of Midwives, U.K.