

Getting birth ready

An information guide



Getting birth ready

This leaflet has been produced to provide help and advice in planning for the birth of your baby. If you have any questions or concerns please speak to your midwife.

Before labour starts

Exercising on a **birthing ball** in pregnancy can help to reduce any back pain you are experiencing and make it easier for you to move around (Yan et al, 2014). It can also help ease labour pain, reduce the pain of contractions (Taavoni et al 2011, Gau et al, 2011; Hau, 2012, Li et al 2013) (especially if you use it for a couple of months before you give birth), decrease anxiety and shorten the first stage of labour (Li et al, 2013).

If your baby is in a posterior (back-to-back) position, adopting upright, forward-leaning positions may encourage him or her to switch around.

Try getting on to your knees and leaning forward over your ball. This may encourage your baby's back to swing forward into an anterior position, with his or her back towards your bump.

During labour you may find you instinctively sway and rock in rhythm with your contractions (Shallow 2003), and a birthing ball gives great support for this. During the pushing stage you will want to avoid sitting, so use the leaning or hands and knees positions. They will take the pressure off your bottom and give your baby lots of room to descend and be born.

Your labour bag

Whether you're planning to have your baby at home, in hospital or at a birth centre, you should get a few things ready at least two weeks before your due date.

All of the items below have proven useful to women and their birthing partners in labour:

- Your hand-held records and birth plan (essential)
- Something loose and comfortable to wear during labour that doesn't restrict you from moving around or make you too hot.
- Sanitary pads
- Your wash bag with toothbrush, hairbrush, flannel, soap and other toiletries
- Towels
- Things to help you pass the time and relax – for example, books, magazines or music
- A sponge or water spray to cool you down
- Front-opening or loose-fitting nighties or tops if you are going to breastfeed
- Dressing gown and slippers
- Five or six pairs of knickers
- A loose, comfortable outfit to wear after you have given birth, and to come home in
- Clothes (including a hat) and nappies for the baby
- A shawl or blanket to wrap the baby in
- Bottles of single use, pre-prepared formula milk if you are planning to bottle feed.

When labour starts

Environment

Dim lighting creates a relaxing, home-like environment. With the lights low, you can retreat into your own world and focus on your labour and the birth of your baby. The hormone you need for labour to progress (oxytocin), and the hormones that will help you through labour (endorphins) may increase in response to the dim lighting. You will be able to listen to your body, change position in response to your surges, and concentrate on your breathing. Low lights may also be more soothing for your baby once he or she is born.

Water

Many women find that lying in warm water enables them to relax easily, is soothing and lets them stay composed and in control of their birth. Evidence suggests that water increases a woman's opportunity to birth normally and have a satisfying birth experience. It is important to keep hydrated whilst in the pool.

Eating and Drinking

Eating and drinking in labour keeps energy levels up and can minimise complications caused by exhaustion. Food and drink can be reassuring and comforting, examples include, cereal bars, biscuits, dried fruits, yoghurt and chocolate. Tea, coffee, water and isotonic drinks are recommended. A full bladder can impede the descent of your baby's head into the pelvis. It is important to regularly empty your bladder during labour.

Keeping upright and mobile

Active birth is well researched; studies show that when you are able to move about and choose supported, comfortable positions throughout your labour such as walking, kneeling, squatting or sitting, there are a number of advantages:

- Less pain
- Freedom to move
- Easier to push
- Shorter labour
- Easier birth
- Less risk of tearing
- More oxygen to the baby
- Quicker recovery.

Birthing Stools

A birthing chair or stool helps to keep you upright while you are pushing and can help with descent and effective pushing techniques. The upright position on the birthing stool feels natural and supportive and enables you to remain empowered throughout your birthing experience. Being seated gives you more control during crowning of the head and the delivery of your baby.

Aids to help if labour plateaus (slows down or stops)

Oxytocin is the hormone that makes the uterus contract and helps your labour progress. It is also known as 'the hormone of love' and is produced during intimacy and breastfeeding. Sometimes during labour things can slow down or sometimes stop. To help increase the oxytocin levels your midwife may suggest close skin to skin contact with your partner and may also suggest other types of natural stimulation which have been found to be helpful.

Notes

Notes

If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

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Dacă engleza nu este prima ta limbă și ai nevoie de ajutor, te rugăm să contactezi Serviciul de interpretare și traducere

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