

# POSITIONS FOR LABOR

MATERNAL MOVEMENT AND OPTIMAL FETAL POSITIONING - REFERENCE GUIDE

## POSITIONS FOR THE FIRST STAGE OF LABOR (FROM EARLY CONTRACTIONS TO THE FULL DILATION OF THE CERVIX)

### UPRIGHT POSITIONS USE GRAVITY TO: • HELP YOUR BABY DESCEND INTO THE PELVIS & ROTATE • PROGRESS YOUR LABOR



#### Walking

- Provides change of scenery
- Boosts your confidence



#### Abdominal Lifting

- Alleviates back and groin pain
- Try abdominal lifts from the beginning to the end of several consecutive contractions



#### Sitting

- Good resting position
- Keep your knees lower than your hips to give the baby enough room to rotate

### FORWARD LEANING POSITIONS USE GRAVITY TO: • HELP THE BABY TURN AND ALIGN PROPERLY • PROGRESS YOUR LABOR • EASE BACK PAIN



#### Sitting

- Lean forward and rest your upper body against a bed, the back of your chair, or another sturdy surface



#### Standing

- Lean against a raised bed, a birth ball that's placed on a bed, or another sturdy surface



#### Hands and Knees

- Support your weight on your hands and knees, or kneel with your upper body on a birth ball
- Consider kneeling on a pillow
- Try this position during contractions, and rest in-between contractions

## POSITIONS FOR THE FIRST STAGE OF LABOR (CONTINUED)

**ASYMMETRICAL POSITIONS** PLACE THE LEGS AT DIFFERENT HEIGHTS, SUCH AS STANDING ON THE FLOOR WITH ONE FOOT ELEVATED ON A STOOL. THIS OPENS ONE SIDE OF THE PELVIS MORE THAN THE OTHER, WHICH HELPS MAKE ENOUGH ROOM FOR THE BABY TO TURN.



### Stair Climbing

- Try stair climbing with a support person nearby
- Use the hand rail to help maintain your balance



### Kneeling Lunges

- Do kneeling lunges on a bed
- A support person is needed to help you maintain balance if you do kneeling or standing lunges
- Try lunging on both sides, and do more on the side that feels best



### Standing Lunges

- Make sure that you have good traction under your feet
- Stabilize a chair or footstool that won't slide and place it to your side
- Stand upright with one foot on the chair and lunge over the raised knee until you feel a stretch in both thighs
- Shift your weight back to an upright position and repeat

**SIDE-LYING POSITIONS** ARE RESTFUL, AND HELP THE BABY ROTATE MORE THAN IF YOU WERE LYING DOWN FLAT ON YOUR BACK. THESE ARE GOOD POSITIONS TO TRY IF YOU'VE HAD AN EPIDURAL, IF YOU'RE TIRED, OR IF YOU'RE PHYSICALLY LIMITED FOR ANY OTHER REASON.



### Side-Lying

- To do this position, lie on your right or left side with a pillow under your top knee for support



### Side-Lying Modified

- You may prefer to roll over onto your chest with your upper knee drawn up toward you, keeping the pillow under your knee for support

**PUSHING POSITIONS:** THERE ARE SEVERAL BENEFICIAL POSITIONS FOR THE SECOND STAGE OF LABOR. CONSIDER TRYING THESE POSITIONS INSTEAD OF LYING FLAT ON YOUR BACK, WHICH DOESN'T OFFER ANY GRAVITY ADVANTAGE, AND MAY NOT GIVE YOUR BABY ENOUGH ROOM TO ROTATE.



### Sitting

- These positions offer gravity advantage, and a little more room for your baby to rotate
- Semi-sitting or sitting upright may not always give babies enough room to move, so consider pushing in a variety of positions



### Hands and Knees

- This position uses gravity to help your baby rotate
- Modify the hands and knees position during the second stage by leaning on the back of the bed, a squatting bar, or over a birth ball



### Squatting

- Squatting has a significant gravity advantage, and opens your pelvis to assist the baby's rotation
- Keep your feet flat on the floor or a sturdy lowered section of the bed, and lower yourself into a squatting position with the help of a partner (you can also use a squatting bar, which attaches to the hospital bed)



### Side-Lying

- During pushing and birth, your legs will need to be far enough apart that the baby can come out
- Your upper leg will be supported by a leg rest that's attached to the hospital bed, or by a support person

### IMPORTANT TIP

Although you may practice these positions, it is crucial that you never attempt actual pushing before your labor begins. When you are in labor, you will need to have your nurse or healthcare provider present when you are pushing to ensure the safety of you and your baby.

### IN GENERAL:

- Practice all of these positions at home with a support person (becoming familiar with them now will make it easier to use them during labor and childbirth)
- It's helpful to change positions every thirty minutes, switching from being restful to being active
- If you find that a certain position or movement feels better than others, and your labor continues to progress, you may stay in that position for as long as you like
- Don't use any position that doesn't feel right, or if the baby's heart rate decreases as you're using it
- Movement can be applied to most of these positions, so experiment until you find movements that feel soothing and natural