

Acute Services Division



Information about ...

# Positions and Breathing for Labour

Princess Royal Maternity Hospital:	<b>0141 201 3432</b>
Queen Elizabeth University Hospital:	<b>0141 201 2324</b>
Royal Alexandra Hospital:	<b>0141 314 6765</b>

This leaflet will give you information about different positions available during labour. Recent evidence shows these positions can help you manage your labour.

## First Stage Labour

Being active helps with early stage of labour and being upright allows gravity to help it progress. Using the following positions and activities such as walking, going up and down stairs, or sitting on your gym ball can all help. You can rock or circle your hips in any of these positions.



## Your birthing partner can help by:

- Encouraging you to relax and breathe calmly
- Massaging your back
- Suggesting a change of position, encouraging you to stay as upright and forward as possible
- Cooling your face with a wet cloth
- Offering sips of water
- Giving you the support and encouragement you need



## Late First Stage

During the late first stage of labour, the contractions will now become much stronger and more painful. Think of them as 'waves' which you have to overcome on your journey towards the birth of your baby. Try to relax in a comfortable position and conserve energy. Some women may also choose to labour in water, either a bath or birthing pool; this may also help with the discomfort and pain.

### To help manage contractions:

- Give a long sighing breath out when the contraction starts
- Your breathing may alter as the contraction builds. Try to avoid the urge to hold your breath or breathe faster
- Instead, to help your breathing switch to 'SOS' (sighing out slowly) breathing. Your birthing partner can encourage you to do this
- Concentrate on ending each contraction with a long sighing breath out
- Try to relax your whole body completely before the start of the next contraction



## End of First Stage

Towards the end of the first stage of labour you may feel tired and your contractions will be stronger and closer together. It is normal to feel pressure at your back passage and some people feel nauseous. This is quite normal, your birthing partner will be able to support and help you through this stage.

**Here are some suggestions:**



## Second Stage

During your second stage of labour, your cervix will be dilated fully and you can actively help to push your baby out into the world. When you feel the normal urge to push, you should work with this feeling, adopting a supported position which is both practical and comfortable for you. Your midwife will guide you to push with your contraction and will usually be happy for you to adopt the position of your choice. 'Listen' to your body and be ready to change position if you feel the need. Sometimes the urge to push is felt before the cervix has become fully dilated; your midwife may ask you to pant or change position in order to relieve this.

### To help manage pushing:

- 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, keeping your pelvic floor relaxed
- Try not to hold your breath; instead, as you push, let your breath escape through your lips





As your baby's head is about to emerge, work with your midwife to control the speed of delivery; you will do this by alternating pushing and panting or doing 'SOS' breathing as they direct you.

For various reasons you may be advised to change position. The main goal is to make sure your baby's health and your health are protected. Your midwife will guide you through your labour and support you in making choices.

## **Further Information**

If you have any questions please contact the Physiotherapy Department.

Inverclyde Royal Hospital:	01475 504 373
Princess Royal Maternity Hospital:	0141 201 3432
Queen Elizabeth University Maternity Hospital:	0141 201 2324
Royal Alexandra Hospital:	0141 314 6765
Vale of Leven Hospital:	01389 817 531

