

Information for patients about

# Relaxation



There are many benefits to using relaxation before, during and after pregnancy. Practising relaxation will help you cope with your labour better by:

- Reducing the pain and intensity of the contractions.
- Helps save energy so you have more to use for later on in labour.
- Allows labour to progress more easily.
- Can help you rest between contractions.

Practise total relaxation at least once per day. Arrange yourself in any comfortable supported position, on a chair or mattress, and follow the instructions below.

### **Pull your shoulders down towards your feet**

Go on pulling them down away from your ears and feel what is happening. You may feel you neck longer, stop doing this and register the new position of ease.

### **Elbows out and open**

Push your upper arms slightly away from your sides. Gently open the angle of your elbows. When you feel this position comfortable stop moving. Now register the shape of your arm and elbow.

### **Fingers long and supported**

Keeping the heel of your hands resting where they are, stretch out your fingers and thumbs wide and long. Go on stretching. Now stop and register the material beneath your fingertips and the spaces between your fingers.

### **Turn your hips outward**

Uncross your legs and roll your knees outwards.

## **Move your knees until they are comfortable**

Stop when you wish and feel the comfort of the position you have chosen for your knees.

## **Push your heels away from your legs**

Stop and feel the new sensation.

## **Push your body into the support**

Press into the mattress or back of the chair, not the seat. Feel your body weight transfer to whatever is supporting it.

## **Push your head into the support**

Stop pushing. Feel the weight of your heavy head totally supported.

## **Drag your jaw downwards**

If possible close your mouth or it may get dry. When the teeth are comfortably separated and you feel your jaw heavy stop. Feel the slackness of your cheeks and lips. Is your tongue stuck to the roof of your mouth? If so gently take it down.

## **Close your eyes**

Your eyes may have already closed, if not, simply lower the top lids down over the eyes. Enjoy the darkness.

Imagine that you are smoothing the area above your eyebrows up towards your hairline, over the top of your head and down the back of your neck.

It is difficult to relax this muscle, as it does not control any joint. Think of this smoothing once or twice more.

## Breathing

If possible breathe in through your nose as it warms and filters the air passing through it.

Take a breath expanding forward and around the lower ribs and then breathe out again slowly and easily. You should feel your ribs fall inward and downwards again. All this should be done without any effort. Finally as you rest there you may choose to go over the sequence again or think of something pleasant. Do not let your mind wander and jump around.

## Returning to full activity

Gently move your fingers and toes. Have a stretch and perhaps a yawn. Do not hurry. Sit up slowly and wait a minute or two before standing.

## Scan Relax

Throughout the day try to look for signs of tension in your body by checking:

- **Are your shoulders held up?**  
Pull them down.
- **Is your jaw clenched?**  
Drag down your mouth.
- **Is your tongue pressed to the roof of your mouth?**  
Let it float freely.
- **Are you clenching your hands?**  
Open, stretch, let go.

## Helpful Links

 [www.ntw.nhs/resource-library/relaxation-techniques](http://www.ntw.nhs/resource-library/relaxation-techniques)

Pzizz Sleep Assist App

 [www.pzizz.com](http://www.pzizz.com)