

Positions for Labour and Birth




Changing positions, and moving around during labour and birth, offers several benefits. Some are obvious to the client in labour: increased comfort / reduced pain, distraction, and an enhanced sense of control.

Beyond these advantages, there are equally important effects on the baby and on the progress of labour. Changing positions during labour can change the shape and size of the pelvis, which can help the baby's head move to the optimal position during the first stage labour, and helps the baby with rotation and descent during the second stage. Swaying motions such as walking, climbing stairs, lunging, and swaying back and forth are especially helpful with this.



During early labour rest should be prioritized, as too much activity can lead to exhaustion. Active labour positions such as walking, climbing stairs and lunging are much more effective once in good strong active labour.

Movement and upright positions in active labour can help with the frequency, length, and efficiency of contractions. The effects of gravity can help the baby move down more quickly.



Resting Positions:

Side Lying: Place a pillow between your knees for comfort	
Semi Sitting: On a bed, couch or against your partner for support	
Sitting with 1 leg up: Asymmetrical positions help change the shape of the pelvis to help the baby find the best position	



Rocking Positions:






<p>Slow Dancing: Rocking and swaying motions can help change the diameter of the pelvis and be comforting to clients during contractions</p>	
<p>Birth Ball: Many clients enjoy swaying and bouncing on the birth ball during contractions</p>	

Active Positions:

<p>Stairs: Can help change the diameter of the pelvis and allow the baby to drop down lower. Stairs can also help make contractions stronger and more frequent.</p>	
<p>Lunges: Can increase the diameter of the pelvis and help the baby descend</p>	

Positions for Back Labour:

<p>Leaning on the birth ball or chair: Leaning forward can help with back pain in labour and aid in moving the baby into an anterior position which is ideal. Leaning positions also allow easy access for massage or comforting touch during contractions</p>	
<p>Straddling a Chair: Forward leaning position which allows for some rest</p>	

<p>Hands and Knees: Can help reduce back pain in labour and allow baby to rotate out of a posterior position</p>	
<p>Positions for Second Stage:</p>	
<p>Semi Sitting: Allows client to wrap hands under knees and pull back on legs during contractions to help open the pelvis.</p>	
<p>Side lying: Partner can help support upper leg. Gravity neutral position, good for fast second stage and allows for rest</p>	
<p>Hands and Knees: Comfortable position for many women to push in.</p>	
<p>Squatting/Sitting on the toilet/Birthing Stool: All of these positions use gravity to help aid in descent of the baby, and also help open the pelvis. These are often positions which clients naturally feel like pushing in.</p>	

*Compiled from: Penny Simkin, *The Labour Progress Handbook*