

## **Breathing In Labour**

Breathing techniques have been used in labour for decades. Many of the early methods focused on specific breathing exercises or patterns. However, many childbirth experts have discovered that while clients may choose to use special breathing during childbirth, it will not necessarily follow a specific pattern. Clients seem to know what is best when it comes to what techniques they prefer and which ones provide comfort during labor. If it seems that a client needs some help with their breathing in labour the midwife will not hesitate to make suggestions.

There are many benefits to using breathing exercises in labour, including relaxation and distraction during contractions. Breathing techniques that slow the rate of breathing also help to avoid hyperventilation.

The following are breathing techniques that can be used to enhance comfort and relaxation during pregnancy, labour and delivery. There is no prescribed format for their use. As labour progresses, if one technique does not seem to be effective any longer, try another. There is no one right way to breathe in labour. Experiment and find out what works best for you.

### **Cleansing Breath**

- To be done at the beginning and end of every contraction
- Breathe in through the nose as deeply as possible, exhale with a full blow out through the mouth
- BREATH IN SHOULD BALANCE (equal) BREATH OUT

### **Slow Rhythmical Breathing**

- Not as deep as a cleansing breath
- Similar to normal breathing pattern but done slowly and rhythmically
- Breathe slowly and rhythmically in through the nose and out through the mouth throughout the contraction.
- Practice will enable you to find a rate and depth most suitable to you

### **Vocalizing**

- Some clients prefer vocalizing such as moaning, groaning or repeating a word or phrase during contractions. It is difficult to practice this ahead of time, since vocalizing this way is often a spontaneous exercise. Try to avoid high-pitched sounds, as they are not as effective and will give you a sore throat.

\*Compiled from Grey Bruce Health Unit:

[www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/Family/Prenatal/Breathing-Techniques.htm](http://www.publichealthgreybruce.on.ca/Family/Prenatal/Breathing-Techniques.htm)