

Comfort Measures in Labor

First Stage - Early Labor



Environment

A calm, relaxing and intimate environment is ideal for labor and allowing oxytocin to flow freely. Dim lighting, along with candles or twinkle lights and quiet will encourage labor progress and a calm mind.

Fresh flowers and plants in the birthing space, and a pleasant aroma from essential oils or something sweet being baked are great ideas.



Comfort Items

Having items out and ready for you to use throughout labor before labor progresses will be helpful. Here are some items to consider using:

- Massage oils
- Heating pads or hot water bottles
- Hand held fans
- Cloths for cold compress
- Rebozo
- Birth and or peanut ball
- Oils for aromatherapy
- Birth affirmation cards
- Lollipops
- Favorite food & drink

Activities

If contractions begin at night but aren't intense, go back to sleep! Rest in the first stage if possible is so important to prepare your body for the hard work of labor. Here are some ideas for when rest isn't possible:

- Go for a walk somewhere peaceful outdoors
- Get a massage from your partner or support person
- Play a card game
- Eat a nutritious meal
- Be intimate with your partner
- Hot shower or bath



Second Stage - Active Labor

Finding a rhythm and learning to surrender to the contractions, leaning into the waves and not trying to run from them will help this stage progress more quickly. Here are some tips for comfort to help you get to that point.

Positions:

Changing your position to get baby into a better position, or changing positions to help keep labor progressing is often necessary during labor and birth. Upright, hands and knees and leaning forward positions have been shown to increase strength of contractions and reduce pain (Dekker).



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Birth Balls and Peanut Balls:

Birth balls and peanut balls are great tools for coping with labor. Try doing figure 8's while sitting on a birth ball, leaning on a birth ball with a pillow and rocking back and forth. Peanut balls are great for getting baby into a better position or to descend if needed during labor, while also allowing you to lie and rest for a moment.



More Upright Methods:

- Standing and leaning against a wall, partner or other support person.
- Using a Rebozo or other fabric to lift the belly or "sift" the belly.
- Dancing or swaying with a partner or support person.
- Squatting in front of partner or support person, while they hold you



These all help to encourage baby's descent and provide relief for you!

References:

Dekker, R. (2023, June 21). Evidence on: Birthing positions. Evidence Based Birth®. <https://evidencebasedbirth.com/evidence-birthing-positions/>

Limp and Loose:

During contractions, avoid tensing the body and squinting the face, keep everything "limp and loose" for effective cervix dilation. Here are some tips for accomplishing this:

<https://www.yourdoulabag.com/blogs/yourdoulabag/15622420-limp-and-loose-in-labor-8-practical-tips>



Breathing:

Let your breath come naturally, slowly and controlled. Avoid letting it speed up too fast or get out of control. Practice breathing deeply in through the nose and releasing through the mouth.



Natural Pain Relief During Labor

Tinctures, Herbs, and Homeopathy

- Crampbark tincture
- Arnica homeopathic remedy
- Chamomile
- Skullcap
- St. John's Wort
- Gentle Birth tincture

"Wise Women Herbals for the Childbearing Year" and "Homeopathy for Pregnancy, Birth, and Your Baby's First Year" are great books for herbs and homeopathy during labor.

Physical Touch

- Counter pressure on the hips and sacrum to decrease tension during contractions
- Massaging shoulders, back, buttocks hands, feet, legs, wherever is needed to relax
- Acupressure

Counter pressure is an amazing tool that anyone on your birth team can help with. Check out some of the videos below for tips on providing effective counter pressure.



Tools & Devices

- Wooden birth comb
- TENS Unit, as pictured below
- Massage guns
- Heating pads
- Birth and peanut balls



Further resources for relief and comfort in labor:

- <https://www.yiskaobadia.com/videos> - **Great videos for comforting touch examples**
- <https://www.sustaininghealthacupuncture.com/post/acupressure-guide-for-labor> - **Acupressure Guide for Labor**
- <https://nationalpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/comfort-in-labor-simkin.pdf> - **Penny Simkin's Comfort in Labor Guide**

References:

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