

## Preparing for Your Labour and Delivery

### Natural Ways to Manage Labour Pain

Natural pain relief methods have many goals: helps you relax, draws your attention away from the pain, eases the active phase of your labour and helps you feel more in control. These methods help many women better manage labour pain, which in turn helps reduce the amount of painkiller medication used throughout the labour and delivery process. However, the perception of pain varies greatly from one woman to the next. That is why it is important to listen to your body. You are best suited to decide what is good for you.

#### **Breathing**

Slow deep breaths will help you relax and keep your baby well oxygenated. A calm environment will help you relax throughout your labour and delivery. Dimming the lights, listening to music (Bluetooth speakers are available), and using any other form of relaxation or visualization contributes to a serene and intimate setting. Aromatherapy diffusers are also available.

#### **Positioning**

Moving and changing positions during your labour will help alleviate your pain. It is, in fact, recommended that you change positions every 15 to 30 minutes. It is better to avoid lying on your back for more than 30 minutes, as this position reduces blood flow to your baby, may cause a drop in your blood pressure and make your baby's descent through the birth canal more difficult. An exercise ball, a positioning pillow and parallel bars are available so you can try different positions.

- The upright position (sitting, standing or kneeling) encourages your cervix to dilate and helps your baby get into the best position for birth.
- The side-lying position allows you to rest as your labour progresses.
- The kneeling position, leaning forward, helps the baby rotate, which might help relieve some of the back pain some women experience during labour.
- The squatting position increases pelvis diameter.



### **Massage**

The person accompanying you through the process of labour and delivery can massage your lower back. It is a good way to relax and release muscular tension. You can also use different pressure points to distract you from your labour pain. It consists in applying pressure to certain areas called “trigger zones”, which naturally releases a painkiller hormone to better cope with the pain associated with contractions. To find out more, you can read about the Bonapace method (<https://www.bonapace.com/en/>).

### **Heat**

A warm bath can help your muscles relax and release tension. We recommend you bring a Magic Bag (or any other reusable heat pad) to apply heat directly on your skin, where the pain is strongest.

### **Other methods**

A TENS machine generates small, safe pulses of electrical current. These pulses can cause slight discomfort which contribute indirectly to decreasing the more intense pain associated with contractions. If you would like to use a TENS machine during labour, you will have to rent one as we do not have any available.

Other methods such as hypnosis and acupuncture require the intervention of specialists. If you think one of these methods is for you, you should contact a professional during your pregnancy.

### **How can my partner help ?**

The support you receive during labour is key to helping you manage the pain. Therefore, you should make sure your partner, or another significant person, will be available to be by your side.

Your partner, or the person accompanying you, will be able to walk around the department with you, remind you to change position often, to comfort you with reassuring words and massages and encourage you to breathe slowly and regularly. That person will be able to assist you and keep you as comfortable as possible (get you light snacks and water, cool wet face cloth, blankets...).

***For more information, talk to your health care provider.***