

Relaxation Techniques for Labor and Delivery

Relaxation is essential for labor. It helps you conserve energy and keeps your mind clear so that you can adjust to your labor with special breathing, positioning, and other relaxation techniques.

Have a positive attitude towards labor. Speaking softly, affirming, and creating a calming atmosphere through use of lighting, music, comfortable positioning, and being surrounded by supportive, caring people, helps you relax during labor and delivery. Here are some relaxation techniques you may find helpful during labor and delivery.

- **Active Relaxation**

- ▶ This method of relaxation is done by contracting and then relaxing individual muscle groups. It helps the person to become aware of the different muscle groups and the sensations of muscle relaxation.
- ▶ Stretching and then relaxing may also feel good. For example, if you are going to have epidural pain relief, make your back like a rainbow, in the shape of the letter “C”.

- **Breathing**

- ▶ Breathing techniques can be very helpful during labor. Taking parenting or Lamaze classes before your due date can teach you techniques that will help to reduce pain during labor.

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- **Guided Imagery or Visualization**

- ▶ Mental images or thoughts can be used to help you relax. Many people form a picture in their mind of a special setting or memory, such as a beach scene, gardens and waterfalls. Integrate all of your senses (sight, hearing, touch, and smell) to help enhance relaxation.
- ▶ Imagery examples: Picture the cervix melting away, a circle getting wider, or a flower with the petals slowly opening. Or picture the softening, opening, releasing, letting go of the pelvic muscles as the baby moves down into the pelvis. When a contraction starts, picture ocean waves or a pendulum swinging back and forth.

- **Massage**

- ▶ Massage or pressure over specific muscle groups may be helpful. Stroke in a circular motion, using light or firm touch, in the same direction as hair growth and away from the heart. This technique may be enhanced by the use of heat or cold, lotion or powder.

- **Music**

- ▶ Many people have favorite music that helps them to relax. Choose music that is pleasing to the ear, is harmonious and rhythmic. Music played by itself or with other forms of relaxation can be soothing.

- **Physical Exercise**

- ▶ Some find that gentle walking or movement is helpful during labor and delivery. Physical activity releases tension and promotes relaxation.

❖ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**