

Third Trimester: Labour

Preparation!

We do many things throughout our pregnancies to prepare for labour, such as childbirth preparation classes or eating a healthful diet. Once we enter the third trimester and the birth of our babies comes near, there are special things we can do to prepare for labour.

Physical Activity

Regular, gentle exercise helps to prepare you for labour and baby to move into an optimal position for birth. Babies who are anterior (facing your back) are better able to move through your pelvis and are better at encouraging the cervix to open.

Exercises to do and positions to adopt on a regular basis

- *Float or swim on your belly*
- *Squat or kneel to garden (protect your knees)*
- *Sit upright or forward lean while relaxing or watching TV*
- *Sleep on your side rather than your back*
- *Practice prenatal yoga*
- *Walking*

Positions to Avoid

- *Reclining while sitting*
- *Allowing the knees to be higher than the pelvis*

- *Avoid crossing your legs*
- *Avoid sitting with your feet elevated*
- *Avoid deep squatting when the baby is in a posterior (facing your front) position*

Stay nourished, hydrated and rested. Make sure you eat well-balanced meals with proteins, vegetables and whole grains so that you are nourished and ready to birth your baby.

Drinking 8 glasses of fresh water each day is important to help you labour efficiently, the way a marathon runner needs to stay hydrated on a run. Hydration is especially important in the summer time.

It's common to wake during the night as your pregnancy progresses. Going to bed earlier, or taking naps if possible are important ways to ensure you are well rested going in to your labour.

Intimacy

Orgasm helps to strengthen the uterus and tone the pelvic floor. Semen contains prostaglandins which help to soften the cervix and prepare it for labour.

Acupuncture

Acupuncture can be used to both treat the discomforts of pregnancy, to promote optimal position of your baby and to prepare your body for labour. Ask your midwife for a referral.

Chiropractic, Osteopathy and Massage

Chiropractic, Osteopathy and Massage are all modalities which help to promote healthy muscle function and good posture. They can be used to help your body support your growing baby and to ensure your baby is in a good position for labour. Ask your midwife for a referral.

Homeopathic's

Pulsatilla 30c can be used daily from 32-36 weeks to encourage baby to get into an optimal position. Use only if baby is not already anterior.

From 32-36 Weeks Onward

Physical Activity

Continue your daily activities, as long as they are comfortable and enjoyable.

- *Each day, spend up to 20 minutes in forward leaning and hands and knees position*
- *Polar Bear- rest so that your knees and chest are on the floor, with your knees spread wide. Use pillows to make yourself as comfortable as possible.*
- *Do the yoga pose cat-cow, alternately rounding and arching your back while on your hands and knees.*
- *Get into hands and knees and sway your pelvis from side to side then rock your pelvis front to back.*
- *Scrub the floor by hand on your hands and knees (use knee protectors!)*
- *Walk up stairs 2 at a time.*

Check out www.spinningbabies.com for more exercises to try if your baby is not in an optimal anterior position.

Evening Primrose Oil

Evening Primrose oil contains essential fatty acids used by your body to make prostaglandins. Prostaglandins soften the cervix in preparation for labour.

- Take 1000mg orally per day
- Insert 1000mg intra-vaginally before bed time as far back in your vagina as possible. Use a panty-liner the next day as there will be an oily discharge.

Botanicals

There are many herbal formulas or tinctures designed to prepare the body for birth. They are often called partus-preparators. We recommend avoiding formulas which contain blue cohosh (*Caulophyllum thalictroides*). Homeopathic blue cohosh is considered safe.

If you are interested in any herbal remedies, speak with your midwife first. Consultation with a clinical herbalist or naturopathic doctor may be suggested.

- Teas can be taken to nourish the body and promote readiness for labour. Herbs such as partridge berry, red raspberry leaf, alfalfa, lemon balm and nettle are nutritious. They will not start labour
- Tinctures can be used / made of a variety of herbs, including partridge berry, black haw or black cohosh.

Essential Oils

An aroma therapist can formulate a labour blend, which can include frankincense, which helps to tonify the uterus. You can also add 3 drops of frankincense, 3 drops of lavender and 1-2 cups of Epsom salts to your bath each night.

Belly Lifting

You can use this technique in the last few weeks of pregnancy. When you have Braxton-Hicks contractions or notice your belly is hard, stand with your knees bent and as the contraction starts, bring your hands around your belly and pull up on the bum of the baby in order to lift your belly. This helps to position the baby optimally in the anterior position. Using belly bands to support your belly can also help to ensure baby is in an optimal anterior position.

38 weeks onward: Stretch and Sweep

This is a procedure where your midwife inserts two fingers into your vagina in order to reach your cervix. If the cervix is open, she will stretch your cervix, which causes prostaglandins to be released, encouraging the cervix to soften and change. Research shows that stretch and sweep reduces the number of pregnancies which go past their due date. Talk to your midwife.