



Healthy Families Homebirth

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Preparing for Labor Optimal Fetal Positioning

Beginning at about 36 weeks, you and your fetus should start getting ready for labor. Exercising is a way that gets your baby into an optimal fetal position can make the labor process go smoother. The best way for your baby to be born is for the back of his head facing the front of your body, or occiput anterior. Babies can be born in different positions, but occiput anterior is ideal for reduced back pain and reducing time in labor. The key to these exercises are an upright, forward leaning positions, with your knees lower than your pelvis. Avoid sitting in semi-reclined positions.

Some exercises to try (it may be helpful for someone to read to you while you try it on the first time):

Cat- cow- sit on the floor on all fours- your hands and knees. Let your belly and head drop to the floor- just breathe and relax. Arch your back- like a cat- while your head and back of your butt reach for the floor. Breathe. Now relax your back and stretch your neck in front of you. (Tilting your head back may cause unnecessary strain on your neck.) Breathe. Do as many as feel comfortable.

Pelvis tilt is a way to bring awareness to your posture. Standing without shoes on, put both hands on your hips. Tilt your hips, in an exaggerated way, to the front. Now tilt your hips to the back, almost as if you're going to sit. Now, sit normally again. Can you feel your hips naturally tilting more to the front or the back? You want the hips to slightly tilt forward. This can be a challenge when you have a big belly tugging at your low back or if you wear high heels often.

Figure 8s- Walking naturally moves your hips in a figure 8 design. Stand with feet hip width apart. Keep your knees bent during this!!! Put your hands on your hips and move your hips- left side forward, right side back; then right side forward and left side back. Keep the movements, slow and steady. Feel free to turn up your favorite tunes and add your own moves too!

Stairs- going up and down stairs is a great way to get your pelvis to tilt properly. Take two or three at a time for a deeper lunge.

Swimming will reduce the added weight and stress to your legs. Swim with a doggie paddle and breast stroke (the legs should kick, instead of a frog swim). This will encourage your baby to have his back on the outside of your belly, and not against your back.

This is general information. Please speak to your health care provider about your unique health needs.



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Prenatal yoga classes- These classes are designed to help your body relax and open up for labor. If these classes leave you feeling stressed or sweating too much, then find one that is focuses more on relaxation.

Other recommendations:

Use your birth ball: Sit on your birth ball instead of the couch or lounge chairs; watching TV, in front of the computer, or knitting. Be sure that is size of the ball is right for you too. The goal is to have your pelvis tilted forward with your knees lower. Sitting towards the front of the birth ball will help with this position.

Kegel-type of exercises strengthen your pelvic floor muscles. To find the correct muscles, try to hold your urine while peeing. After using the bathroom, now that you know what the muscles feel like, try to tighten them, holding it for a few seconds, and relaxing them. Another way to find the correct muscles is to sit on the floor or a flat-backed chair. Place a hand on your abdomen and suck in your muscles, as if you are trying to zip up tight pants. Once there you may notice that your pelvic floor is also lifted.

As you strengthen these muscles, you can hold it for up to 30 seconds. Doing 10 long Kegels a day, will tone those muscles, and help the baby rotate and descend during labor.

For more information [How Will I Be Born?: What babies wish their mothers knew](#) by Jean Sutton is an excellent resource.

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