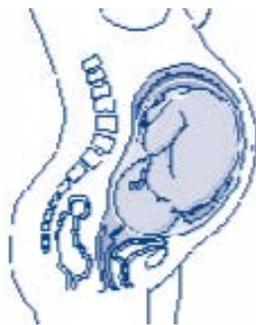


Getting your baby into the best position for birth



Information for women and partners

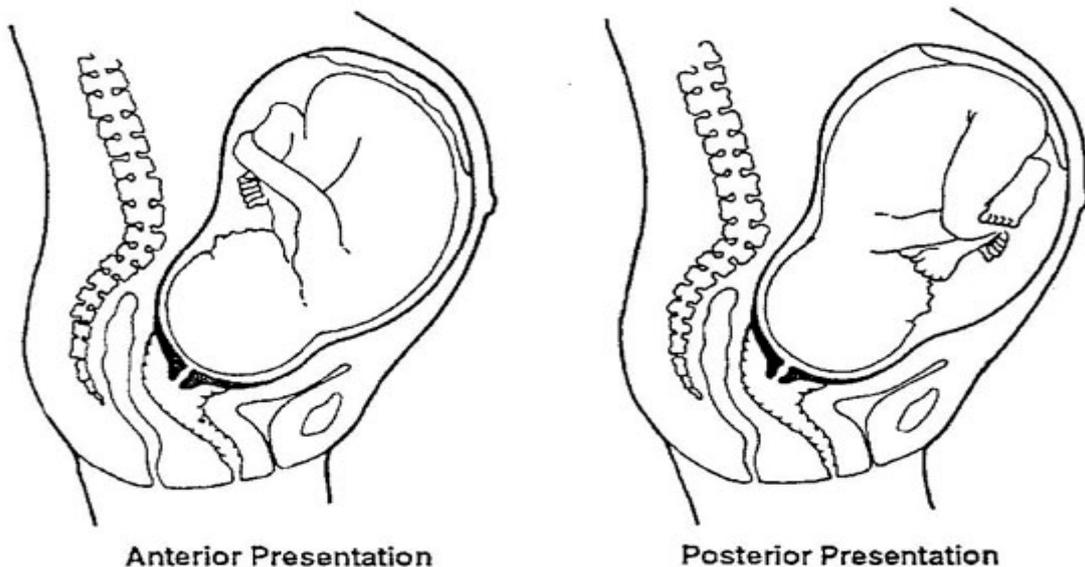
Maternity Services

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What is the best position?

This information leaflet explains how you can help to get your baby in the best possible position before labour starts. The best position for a straightforward labour and birth is occipito-anterior (OA). In the OA position, your baby is head down with his or her face looking at your spine. In the occipito-posterior (OP) position, your baby is head down, facing your navel. An OP baby and mother must do more work in order to have a vaginal birth. Labour is often longer and more painful, while the baby attempts to turn to the OA position.

This information is not for all women, in particular, women with medical/pregnancy disorders, low lying placenta at 34 weeks or twins. Therefore, you **MUST** check with your midwife or doctor that it is safe for you to practice optimal fetal positioning.



Mothers whose babies are lying in the OP position often experience backache and many of their movements are felt at the front of their tummy. The cause of the backache is due to the wider part of baby's head rubbing against the mother's spine and pressing on the sacral nerves (RCM 2012). Within the female pelvis, we have a curve,

when the baby is supported against the mother's spine this can prevent the baby's head from flexing fully (tucking its chin in) and so can affect the baby moving down into the pelvis. An easy analogy is that the pelvis is like a U-bend in the toilet with the baby acting like a straight toilet brush.

Things to do

- Regularly use upright and forward leaning positions. This will allow up to 28% more available pelvic space, for your baby to get into the correct position.
- Try to sit with your knees lower than your hips, with your back as straight as possible. Use pillows and cushions under your bottom and the lower back region for added comfort.
- Sit to read on a dining chair with arms resting on a table, keep your knees apart, leaning slightly forward.
- When resting sit back-to-front on a dining chair with your arms resting on the chair back (this may not be suitable for people with pelvic pain)
- Practice sitting on a birth/exercise ball.
- Put a wedge cushion under your bottom when driving.
- Kneel on the floor leaning over a bean bag/floor cushion/birth ball to watch T.V.
- Do some exercises each day such as walking or swimming. The natural pelvic rocking that occurs when exercising will encourage the baby to move in a good position.
- When resting/sleeping, lay on your side, preferably left, with a pillow between your legs, the top knee resting on the bed.
- Various exercises done on all fours can help, e.g. wiggling your hips from side to side, or arching your back like a cat, followed by levelling the spine.

These positions are good to use when you start to experience practice contractions (Braxton hicks) as these increase their

effectiveness with regard to helping the baby manoeuvre into the optimum position.

If possible stay on your feet leaning forward and rocking hips from side to side/up and down with each step, your bottom wiggling during contraction.

A Birth Ball can encourage good positioning, both before and during labour.

Cat arching (pelvic rocking)

How: From a hands and knees position you tuck your bottom under by contracting your abdominal muscles and arching your back, and then slowly relaxing and levelling the spine. Purpose: During pregnancy this is a great way to relieve pressure from the back, as well as strengthening abdominal muscles. It causes the belly to hang down and gravity can help move a baby to a favourable position if the baby's not already there. During labour this exercise can be used to alleviate back pain and help move baby down.



Things to avoid

Avoid positions which encourage your baby to face your tummy. These can include slouching back in armchairs, sitting in car seats where you are leaning back or anything where your knees are higher than your pelvis.

Don't cross your legs. This reduces the space at the front of the pelvis and opens it up at the back. For good positioning, the baby needs to have lots of space at the front.

Don't put your feet up. Lying back with your feet up encourages a posterior presentation. The back of the baby's head is heavier than its tummy gravity therefore, pulls the baby's back to the mother's back and can cause the back of the baby's head to press against the mother's sensitive lower spine leading to an OP position.

Avoid deep squatting, which opens up the pelvis and encourages the baby to move down, until you know he or she is facing the right way.

Reference

RCM (2012) Evidence Based Guidelines for Midwifery-Led Care in Labour Persistent Lateral and Posterior Fetal Positions at the Onset of Labour

For more information

<https://www.tommys.org/pregnancy/labour-birth/baby-best-position-birth>

<https://spinningbabies.com/>

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01535 294019

Author: Kirsty Tudor-McAdam ANC/MAC/EPAU Manager

Date of publication: May 2020

Date of review: month/year May 2022

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