



COPING MEASURES IN LABOR

MOVEMENT

Once we have established a good heart rate pattern on your baby, you may be able to walk in the hallways, around the OB unit or in your room.

BREATHING AND RELAXATION

We know you are excited and even a little nervous as your labor progresses. We can help you relax with a couple of breathing techniques.

The first works well in **early labor**. As the contraction starts, take a cleansing breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. As the contraction occurs, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth taking nice deep cleansing breaths. When the contraction ends, take another cleansing breath in through your nose and out through your mouth and relax into the bed or chair or onto your partner. Progressively relax all of the muscles in your body starting from your neck, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers, moving to your legs and your feet and toes. Try not to think about the next contraction. Your partner may rub your back or feet slowly between contractions. Try to imagine your body doing exactly what it is supposed to do – the tissues are stretching to make room for your baby's descent and your baby is moving inside of you to be born.

Another technique you may use when the contractions become stronger during **active labor** is known as the "He-He-Hoo" breathing. With this technique, you first take a cleansing breath, then you breathe out and exhale while making a "he" sound, and take a breath quickly before the next "he." With the last "hoo," you are exhaling for longer. This is a patterned breathing style designed to distract you and keep you from holding your breath during the contraction.

Don't worry if you don't get this at first, the nurse can help you.

THE JACUZZI BATHTUB

Many women find jacuzzi bathtubs extremely relaxing in labor. As long as you are not receiving Pitocin or an epidural, this should be fine. We will check your baby's heart beat in the water every 15 min or so. Make sure the water is not too hot.

MASSAGE

Many women find that a foot rub between contractions feels great. You can use a favorite lotion or aromatherapy drops. Long sweeping massage movements down her back can be soothing. Coaches, remember to keep your movements slow to compliment her breathing. Some women also find a scalp massage and rubbing the nape of her neck and temples soothing.



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COUNTERPRESSURE

With hip or back pain – as in back labor – it may feel good to have someone rub around your hips as you are standing and leaning on a chair. With back labor, your coach will provide counterpressure on your lower back. You will direct how firm of pressure you need. Counterpressure is usually done during a contraction when back pain is at its worst.

THE LABOR BALL

The labor ball is essentially a rubber exercise ball. You can squat as you are sitting on it, opening up your pelvis. Bounce on the ball as you breathe rhythmically through the uterine contractions. We can even bring another ball in for your coach to sit opposite you holding your hands, bouncing with you and helping you with the breathing. The ball can be moved close to the monitor so even if you need to be monitored, you can still use the ball.

THE ROCKING CHAIR

Many women find the relaxation and rhythmic movement in a rocking chair along with the breathing soothing. As you breathe throughout the contraction, you can focus on a fixed point in the room, perhaps a picture you have brought, or you may prefer to close your eyes. Some laboring women prefer to look at their coach as their coach breathes with them and gives them encouragement.

AROMATHERAPY

If you like aromatherapy and find it soothing, we have essential oil mixtures designed for each phase of labor. You can use these directly on your skin or combined with a plain lotion. Most of them contain lavender.

SHOWERS

If you're not in the mood for a jacuzzi, a shower might be your option. The sound of the water in the shower is often very relaxing.

YOUR LABOR BED

Your labor bed is quite versatile and adjusts to several positions. You can have the head of the bed up, facing and leaning on it while you are on your knees, with your coach rubbing your back or giving you counterpressure on your back or hips. The foot of the bed also drops down.

MORE POSITIONS IN LABOR

Here are some more positions to help with your discomfort: leaning against the chair in the room; getting on all fours on the floor with a blanket beneath you (getting off your back is often very helpful); rocking side to side while breathing through the uterine contractions.

THE LABOR DANCE

Face your coach with bent knees, place your feet shoulder width apart. As you have a contraction, breath and rock from side to side together. This is a helpful move as you will be rocking your baby from side to side like this soon.

IF YOU NEED TO STAY IN BED

Remember that if you need to stay in bed, you can still move side to side to relieve some of the discomfort. When you need to push, you can push on your back with a wedge or on your side. With an epidural, patients can still occasionally squat using a labor bar.

Remember! These are all just suggestions. If you feel comfortable lying in the bed just resting between contractions, that is fine as well. Just remember to try to stay off your back. At least stay in a tilted position to optimize blood flow to your baby. Staying off your back will also often help you from getting nauseated.

Keep in mind that we are not only taking care of you and your coach, but are also looking after your baby. Occasionally due to a procedure, you will not be able to try certain relaxation techniques. At other times, we may wish to keep a closer eye on the baby and may require that you be monitored consistently. If the situation changes and you can change your position, we will let you know.

Also know that if you choose, we have IV medication available with the approval of your care provider.

You may also have an epidural at any time upon your request with the approval of your care provider.

Feel free to ask us as many questions as you need. We are here to help you cope with labor and make this a positive experience for you and your family.



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