

Comfort Measures for Labor

Rhythm, Repetition, Ritual: Finding a repetitive action early in labor to go back to every time a contraction comes is very helpful for many people.

- Tapping
- Swaying
- Saying a mantra to yourself
- Squeezing something, etc.

Movement: Moving in labor can have a significant analgesic effect. It also helps your body and baby work together to help labor progress.

- Hip movement: swaying, rocking, circling
- Walking
- Squatting with support
- Being on your hands and knees
- Sitting on a birth ball and rocking

Sound: Making noise is incredibly helpful in labor and can help you stay tuned into your breath. Low sounds and sounds that encourage your jaw and neck to relax help the most.

- Sighing
- Horse lips
- Moaning
- Mooing
- Roaring
- Bellowing

Breath: Actively focusing on your breath is a great way to calm your nervous system and distract your conscious mind from the intensity of labor

- Taking a deep cleansing breath after each contraction and blowing it away.
- Breathing in your nose and out your mouth. Especially helpful when labor feels very intense.
- Breathing to a count (1,2,3,4, etc.) during contractions.
- Breathing with your support person.

Support: Your support people are here for you. You don't have to be polite or apologetic about expressing your needs. You also don't have to know what you need. We will offer ideas and help you figure out what is helpful.

- Ask for what you want and say when you don't like something.
- When offered a new technique, try to give it a few contractions to see if it's useful to you.



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Focus: Directing your attention can help you manage the sensation of labor. There are also many wonderful self-hypnosis programs that can help you train your mind to focus in ways that ease labor.

- Visual focal point: Stare at a specific image, point in space, into your partner's eyes, etc.
- Hearing: Notice and name all the sounds you hear as you hear them (or having someone else name them).
- Smell: Inhale the scent of an essential oil during your contractions. Put on a washcloth or napkin, not on your body.
- Inward focus: Attend to the sensations of your physical body without judgement.

Affirmations: Finding one or two phrases that feel grounding and meaningful to you can be a helpful focusing tool to say to yourself (inwardly or out loud), and to have your support people say to you.

Touch: Stimulating touch receptors provides the nervous system with a distraction from the sensations of labor.

- Soft stroking
- Firm massage
- Acupressure
 - Sacrum
 - Tops of shoulders
 - Feet
 - Squeezing dryer balls

Hot and Cold: Many people find heat or cold to be helpful at various stages of labor.

- Cool washcloths, the air from a handheld fan, mist of water from a spray bottle.
- Warm cloths or a hot water bottle on the lower back, belly, shoulders.

Water: Hydrotherapy has proven benefits in labor.

- Getting in the shower or tub. If the water begins to feel less helpful, getting out for a while and then getting back in can restore its effectiveness).

