

## Birth partners role

**Your birth partner plays an essential role in labour. They are your one-stop-shop for support, entertainment and advocacy, speaking up for you if you need them to.**

Research shows that women who have a birth partner in labour are happier with their birth experience. Your birth partner can be the dad, a relative or a friend – you may even want two!

### Understand the birth process

They need to know what's going on, so they can help you make informed choices. This could mean joining you for antenatal classes or reading the same information you do and chatting about it with you.

### Be your advocate

To support your choices and be your voice, if you're struggling to communicate your needs.

### Physically support you

From holding your hand, to giving a massage and helping you to the toilet or supporting you in different birth positions.

### Help you create a calm environment

Whether it's making a playlist of your favourite songs or dimming the lights and getting out the aromatherapy oils! Whatever it takes to help you stay calm and relaxed.

### Anticipate your needs

Your needs will vary throughout labour and a great birth partner will understand this. Encourage them to practise your breathing and relaxation techniques with you so they can help you stay focussed and in control.

### A good communicator

There are times you might become quite direct in labour and you don't want your partner to take offence! Your partner should also be comfortable asking the maternity team questions and speaking up for you when necessary.

*Birth partners need to eat and drink normally in labour, maintaining their energy levels will mean they can look after you better!!*

## Can we help?

Our midwife-led antenatal classes give you the tools to approach birth and parenting with confidence, even if things don't go to plan. If you're looking for classes we'd love to support you.

Find out more at

[www.newlifeclasses.com](http://www.newlifeclasses.com)

*"This course is very helpful for first-time parents. It goes through things we wouldn't have even thought about. Well worth the money and great to meet new parents too."*

Amanda & Craig.



## Communicating birth preferences

**Writing a birth plan gives your midwife a clear understanding of your preferences for birth and the first few hours with your baby.**

It's a good idea to have a full understanding of all the options available to you so you can make informed choices and feel well prepared for all possibilities. Your choices may change on the day so try to create a flexible document that covers the various situations that might arise.

### Where can you get information?

- There's no such thing as a silly question so ask your health professionals lots of them!
- Good online sources of evidence-based information include [nhs.co.uk](http://nhs.co.uk), [babycentre.co.uk](http://babycentre.co.uk) (babycentre.com is American), [emmasdiary.co.uk](http://emmasdiary.co.uk) and [newlifeclasses.com](http://newlifeclasses.com).
- Antenatal classes – especially if taught by midwives.

### Things to think about

- Visit your local hospitals and birth centres. Where would you like to give birth?
- What pain relief options are available to you?
- If you needed medical interventions in labour how would you feel?
- Who do you want as your birth partner? What are your expectations of this person?
- How will you emotionally prepare for labour?

### Things to practice (with your birth partner)

Relaxation techniques: from hypnobirthing, mindfulness and other meditation practices to massage and breathing techniques. Mental preparation plays a big part in staying calm and relaxed in childbirth.

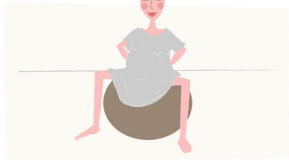
Birth positions: What feels comfortable? What equipment is available to you? What do you think you'd like to try?

# Birth positions for all stages of labour

Research shows being active in labour can reduce the need for medical intervention and even shorten the first stage of labour by up to an hour!

Gravity is your friend – it will help your baby move down the birth canal during contractions. Here are just a few of the many birth positions that you can use in labour. Why not give them a go and see which feel most comfortable?

## Early labour



**Breath:** Deep, abdominal breathing.

**Position:** Bouncing on a birth ball allows you to move, whilst taking the weight off your legs and allowing gravity to help your baby in the right direction.

**Birth partner:** Your main role in early labour is distraction and keeping mum's energy levels up with food and drinks.



**Breath:** Deep, abdominal breathing.

**Position:** Stand leaning against the wall or your birth partner. Swaying in this position takes the weight off your lower back and encourages your baby to rotate and descend.

**Birth partner:** This is a great position for a light back massage. Be aware of the length and frequency of contractions – no need to write them down.

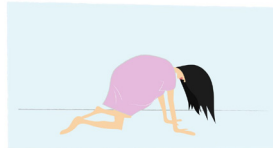
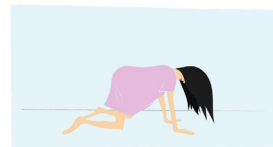
## Active labour



**Breath:** Slow, deep and controlled breathing.

**Position:** Water offers lots of benefits in labour. It's an effective, natural pain relief option. It gives you a sense of weightlessness allowing you to easily use different birth positions, such as floating, sitting, kneeling against the side for support or squatting as you push your baby out.

**Birth partner:** You can be in the pool too – just remember to pack some swimwear!



**Breath:** Slow, deep and controlled breathing.

**Position:** Pelvic tilts are great for relieving back pain and rotating your baby from a back-to-back position, if needed. Arch your back and tuck in your bottom as you take a deep breath. Then relax and flatten your back as you breathe out – be careful not to dip your back, keep it straight to avoid hurting your lower back.

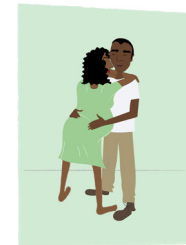
**Birth partner:** Relax and offer support if needed. Remember it's important to eat well and stay hydrated to sustain your own energy levels!



**Breath:** Slow, deep and controlled breathing.

**Position:** Use a birth ball to lean onto the bed. Try to relax and conserve some energy – this position will help you remain upright but takes the weight off your feet. You can still be active if your baby is being monitored.

**Birth partner:** This is a great position for a massage! A hip squeeze can help reduce pain during a contraction.



**Breath:** Slow, deep and controlled breathing.

**Position:** Standing and swaying can help your baby descend. Lean against your birth partner for more support.

**Birth partner:** Support mum in this position and talk her through her breathing. Offer positive reinforcement here and help mum stay in control.

*"Birth should be your greatest achievement not your greatest fear."  
Jane Weideman*

## Second stage: Involuntary pushing

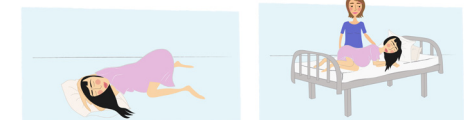


**Breath:** Deep breathing, allowing your body to bear down during a contraction.

**Position:** Upright positions are good when you feel the need to push. Lean across the back of the bed, you can stand or kneel using pillows to support you, or squat using a birthing stool. Relax your muscles, particularly around your pelvis, and let your body do its job. Focus on your baby moving down the birth canal.

**Birth partner:** Help keep mum in control and offer positive encouragement and motivation, as mum's energy may start to wane.

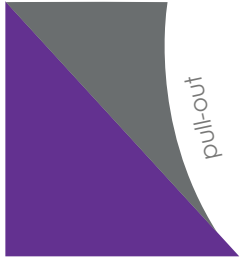
## Second stage: Active pushing



**Breath:** Take a deep breath at the start of your contraction, tuck your chin into your chest, hold your breath and push for as long as you can. Then let that breath out and repeat.

**Position:** Lying down on your side or kneeling on all fours are good positions when actively pushing your baby out. Push for the whole contraction to keep your baby moving down the birth canal and around the tilt of your pelvis.

**Birth partner:** Motivation and encouragement – she's almost there!



pull-out

# my birth preferences

I am planning to deliver:

- At home
- Freestanding birth centre \_\_\_\_\_
- Co-located birth centre \_\_\_\_\_
- In the obstetric unit (hospital) \_\_\_\_\_

My birth partners:

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Will accompany me into theatre, if necessary:

\_\_\_\_\_

**[** You can usually have more than one birth partner, if you have a caesarean or instrumental birth only one birth partner can typically accompany you into theatre. **]**

I am happy to have a student midwives or medical students present during the birth of my baby:

- Yes
- No

**[** It is common for student midwives to work alongside midwives. Having their extra support can be a real bonus! **]**

I would like the following pain relief during labour:

**Natural:**

**Pain relief I would like to avoid and why:**

I plan to have:

- Vaginal birth
- Elective caesarean

I would like to use a birth pool:

- Yes
- No

I would like to use the following positions during labour:

**Pharmaceutical:**

# my birth preferences

Delivery of the placenta:

- I would like a managed third stage (Syntometrine/ Syntocinon injection)
- I would like a physiological third stage

**[** You might be advised to have a managed third stage if it's thought you have an increased risk of bleeding. **]**

I would like skin-to-skin contact with my baby:

- Yes
- No

**[** Skin-to-skin contact is recommended following the birth of your baby and should be routine practice in all birth settings. **]**

I plan to:

- Breastfeed by baby
- Express my breastmilk
- Formula feed by baby
- I plan to formula feed but would like to breastfeed colostrum

Additional notes for my midwife:



I would like my baby to be given vitamin K:

- By injection
- Orally
- I don't want my baby to be given vitamin K

Special requests after my baby is born:

- Let my birth partner tell me the sex of my baby
- Delayed cord clamping
- Let my birth partner cut the umbilical cord

Other

**[** Delayed cord clamping is routine in all birth settings, but it's worth double checking with your doctor or midwife to be sure. **]**