

## 25 Good Reasons to Use the Birth Ball

- Its use facilitates physiologic positions for labor
- It encourages fetal descent
- It assists in rotation of the baby in the posterior position
- It encourages pelvic relaxation
- It allows for pelvic rocking and body movements
- It encourages rhythmic movement
- It helps relieve back pain
- It can be used with both external and internal electronic fetal monitoring
- It encourages pelvic mobility
- It provides perineal support without undue pressure
- It takes advantage of gravity during and between contractions
- There is less strain on wrists and hands when in the hands and knees position
- It helps when a back rub or back pressure is needed
- The ball may enhance rotation and descent in a difficult birth
- The ball can be used as support while squatting
- Its use helps widen the pelvic outlet to its maximum dimension while used during the second stage while squatting
- It eliminates hard external pressure of a bed, chair and rocker when sitting
- It allows freedom to shift weight for comfort
- It helps take pressure off of hemorrhoids
- It encourages good physiologic resting position
- It may speed labor
- It helps contractions to be less painful and more productive
- It is beneficial with techniques for failure to progress
- In shoulder dystocia, it can support the mother that needs to be on hands and knees to facilitate rotation of the posterior shoulder.

Using the ball with music activates the right brain by controlling somatic and autonomic activity.

encourages "physical" rather than "thinking")

## Why does this ball work?

The "birth ball" can treat birth pain with mechanical receptors. In labor, gently moving on the birth ball promotes optimal positioning and pain reduction during contractions and also elicits spontaneous non-habituating movement. The ball allows the pregnant woman to rock back and forth but unlike a rocking chair, the mother is on a softer surface. The firm birth ball has a springy surface and is a useful prop in labor. The ball is used most effectively if the mother is motivated and the mother must feel safe so that she can relax.

The use of the birth ball as a "safe spine chair" decreases the incidence of pain in the lumbar spine, sacro-iliac and joint. In pregnancy, the mother can find changes in posture that affects the vertebral column and circulation, particularly in the lower limbs (Ceron). A study done in Australia, showed that sitting on the ball revealed a low incidence of backache in late pregnancy (Gabriel, 1999). The ball especially enhances the tone of the abdomen which will need to be used in childbirth. The ball also provides support for the pelvic floor which is already under strain during pregnancy.

The ball conforms to her body and uses natural pressure points. It also helps her to not "tighten up" while in labor. The use of the ball allows the mother to utilize positions that encourage ritual activity, pelvic mobility while giving her the freedom to rock her pelvis, change her position and shift her weight for comfort. The ball can be used in conjunction with both external and internal electronic fetal monitoring.

While on the ball, the mother assumes positions that will encourage the baby to rotate to the optimal position for labor and birth. The labor support person can use counter pressure easily when the mother is in the resting position on the ball.