



Using a birth ball in pregnancy and labour

A birth ball can relieve back ache and encourage your baby into the Optimal Foetal Position (OFP) for labour i.e. head down and spine to the left (as you look down at your tummy). Slumping in settees, or in car seats, does *not* encourage good position – in fact these positions encourage your baby into a back-to-back position (its spine lying along your spine) which can lead to longer and more uncomfortable labours. Not what we want!

Generally, you need to keep your knees lower than your hips to encourage the baby's natural descent into the pelvis and practice being on all fours as often as you can (fancy scrubbing the kitchen floor?) – both of which are easy to do using a birth ball. When sitting on your birth ball, you should ideally have your knees 10cm lower than your hips, certainly no higher than hips. Sit slightly to the front of the ball, legs apart and feet pointing out slightly for good stability. You can sit like this, with movements (see below) when working, watching tv, etc etc.

On your own

Sitting on ball

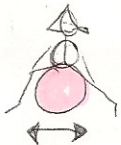


Bounce (carefully - poss with hands under baby). Nice during pregnancy and *may* be nice during early stages of labour



Hip circles – pregnancy and first stage labour

All sorts of **arm exercises**, stretching up and to sides – pregnancy only



Moving side to side – pregnancy

Cat/all fours



Resting over ball Bring one foot forward - good for pregnancy and labour and move hips in circles

Sit & lean



... back on the ball. Rest ball against wall. Legs comfortable - try feet together, knees apart, with cushions under knees/thighs, cushion under head and neck. Pregnancy

Stand & lean

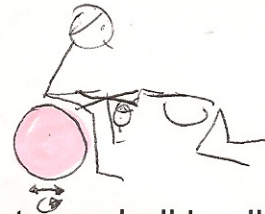


... your body over the ball. The ball will need to be raised up securely on something, like a chair or table against a wall

With your partner

Partner on ball, you on all fours

And you are on your knees, arms crossed, resting on partners thighs, head dropped or resting on partners thighs too. Partner can rock forwards and back or side to side. Labour – first and poss second stage



You rest over ball in all fours

And your partner has access to your lower back/upper back/legs/feet for massage etc. Remember to have cushioning under knees. First stage of labour



Partner on ball, you squat

Your partner sits on the ball and you squat with your back against the ball, head resting in his lap or lifted up. Your arms resting over his legs, hands draping downwards. Feet firmly on floor (to keep pelvic floor relaxed) and possibly support under your bottom (blocks, yellow pages, cushion etc). Second stage labour



Note: if you know your baby is **breach**, don't try positions which encourage the baby to move further into the pelvis, rather you need to practice the 'braking position' regularly.