

## GUIDING YOUR BABY INTO AN OPTIMAL POSITION

This information may help you to assist your baby into the most favourable position for birth before labour begins. From 34 weeks onwards, your own postural awareness and habits can potentially encourage your baby to lie with his/her back to your left front/side (occipito anterior) so that the baby's head engages in the pelvic brim in this position. This will increase the potential for a normal and straightforward birth. A baby already lying the other way, with spine against your spine, and facing forward (occipito posterior) can be encouraged to rotate to the anterior position in late pregnancy or during early established labour. A few babies will remain posterior and this may not be a problem. However, because the extra rotation needed can mean a longer labour and complications do sometimes occur with posterior births, it is worth doing your best to encourage your baby into the optimal position. Please note this advice is intended to complement your antenatal care, and may not be suitable for all women or all pregnancies. Always consult your midwife or other maternity carer.

<b>TRY</b>	<b>AVOID</b>
<i>Using upright forward leaning postures regularly. This allows more available space in the abdomen for your baby to lie with spine rotated to the front. Be on your hands and knees now and then, swinging your hips (baby hammock).</i>	<i>Relaxing in a semi-reclining position. These tip the pelvis back with knees higher than the hips so that gravity will encourage the baby's spine to be posterior.</i>
<i>Always sit with your knees lower than your hips, with your back vertical. Do this by using a few cushions to sit on and another in the small of your back if needed. Sitting on a birth ball is another idea, in a similar posture to when sitting on the toilet. Or sit facing the chair back, resting your arms on the back of the chair</i>	<i>Taking long trips in cars with bucket seats. If you must, use a wedge cushion under your backside to elevate the pelvis so that the hips are slightly higher than the knees, as above.</i>
<i>Kneel on the floor leaning over a large beanbag or cushion to watch TV.</i>	<i>Sitting with your legs crossed.</i>
<i>Swim with the abdomen forward (avoiding breaststroke – the kick can potentially strain the softened pelvic ligaments).</i>	<i>Using any deep squatting positions after about 34 weeks. This may make it more difficult for the baby's head to engage optimally.</i>

If your baby is in the posterior position in labour, try making yourself comfortable, with pillows, in the knees to chest position in early established labour for up to 45 minutes at a time. This will encourage your baby to rotate. Otherwise, use all fours, or forward leaning kneeling or standing positions. Avoid lying on your back in a semi-reclining or supine position in bed.

For further information grab a copy of "Optimal Foetal Positioning" by Jean Sutton and Pauline Scott (1996) or log onto <http://www.homebirth.org.uk/ofp.htm>

**Compiled by Birth Matters 2005**