



Massage in labour

Information for patients
from the physiotherapy department



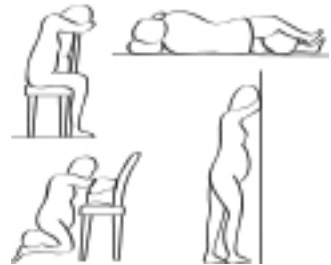
ADVICE FOR MASSEURS

1. Always have relaxed hands. It is more comfortable for your partner, and you are less likely to get cramp.
2. Put a little talc/baby oil/baby lotion on your hands so that you don't create friction burns! It also makes massage much easier.
3. Slow movements are more relaxing than fast ones. Think about speed. You may inadvertently speed up if you are anxious.
4. No tickling! Don't be frightened to apply firm, deep pressure when massaging the back - this is usually more comfortable. But, only use light pressure for the abdomen.
5. Have hands totally in contact with the skin.
6. Get feedback from your partner on how good (*or bad!*) the massage is.

POSITIONS FOR MASSAGE

Examples:

- a. Astride a chair
- b. Side lying with pillows for support
- c. Leaning forward against a wall or surface of correct height. ie, Where the back can be exposed, but the body is supported.



Skin-to-skin contact is better than massaging through clothes!

TECHNIQUES

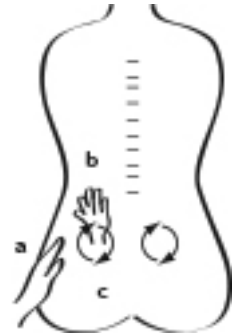
- 1. One hand (a) supports her pelvis. The other (b) should be placed flat on her back.

Make small circulatory movements using the palm of your hand. Repeat. The movement should go away from the spine.

Repeat the other side of the spine. Take about two seconds to complete each circle.

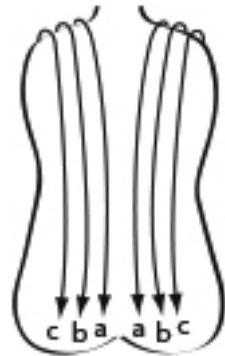
If your partner is well supported, two hands may be used on either side of the spine, moving simultaneously (b) and (c). Keep your hand firmly on the same area of skin as you make the circles. Don't slide over the skin - this is less effective.

Obtain feedback from your partner - depth? speed? area?



- 2. Giving resistance by applying pressure to the low back (*over the spine*) as your partner breathes in, then release the pressure as she breathes out, may also be an effective form of pain relief.

- 3. If your partner has discomfort in her back or sacral area, try laying both hands on her hips - press them together when she has a contraction.



4. Stroking. Long, slow, gentle strokes down the length of her back. Don't forget the shoulder area.

Start in the middle of the back (a), and work out to the sides (b) and (c).

You may also like to try:

- ❖ stroking up the back
 - ❖ stroking across the base of the back
 - ❖ stroking diagonally across the back
 - ❖ stroking your partners abdomen, or she could do this herself.
5. To relax tense elevated shoulders, use the relaxation techniques. Also, place your hands on the tense muscle, push deep, squeeze and release.

OTHER AREAS

1. Instead of gripping your partners hand tightly when she has a contraction, encourage her to keep her fingers widespread to relax the hands. This can be aided by stroking the back of the hand.



2. Aching legs can be relieved by rubbing and stroking to improve the circulation. This includes the feet -very relaxing, especially in the second stage.

BENEFITS OF MASSAGE

1. Pain relief by:

- ❖ distraction effect
- ❖ stimulation of the sensory nerves will block some of the pain from the uterus/back etc.
- ❖ stimulation of the production and circulation of endorphins - nature's pain relief.
- ❖ relaxing tense muscles make them ache less.

2. Improved circulation to the lower back and abdomen results in

- ❖ faster removal of the painful products of muscle work (*lactic acid*)
- ❖ increased blood supply carrying oxygen and nutrients to that area.

3. Relaxation and feeling of well being.

Slow massage is one way of breaking the vicious cycle of stress and tension. Also use the relaxation techniques you have learned to decrease anxiety and pain. Perhaps the most important benefit - the "laying on of hands" plays an invaluable part of reassurance and comfort. Those performing the massage will also gain a feeling of giving.

All of these techniques are suitable for use ante-natally and post-natally as well as during labour. Always remember to have the body well supported. This is essential, especially when giving deep, firm pressure massage.

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