



# Relaxation

A guide for patients from  
the Physiotherapy department





There are many benefits to using relaxation before , during and after pregnancy. Practicing the techniques taught in your ACTIVE BIRTHING CLASSES will help you cope with your labour better by:

- ❖ Reducing the pain and intensity of the contractions
- ❖ Helps save energy so you have more to use for later on in labour
- ❖ Allows labour to progress more easily.
- ❖ Can help you rest between contractions

Practice total relaxation at least once per day. Arrange yourself in a comfortable position and follow the instructions below.

- ❖ **Pull your shoulders down towards your feet**  
Go on pulling them gently down, away from your ears and feel what is happening. You may now feel your neck longer. Stop doing this and register the new position of ease.
- ❖ **Elbow out and open**  
Push your arms slightly away from your sides. Gently open the angle of your elbows. When you feel this position comfortable stop moving. Now register the shape of your arm and elbow.
- ❖ **Fingers long and supported**  
Keeping the heel of your hands resting where they are, stretch out your fingers and thumbs wide and long. Go on stretching. Now stop and register the material beneath your fingertips and the spaces between your fingers.
- ❖ **Turn your hips outwards**  
Uncross your legs and roll your knees outwards.
- ❖ **Move your knees until they are comfortable**  
Stop when you wish and feel the comfort of the position you have chosen for your knees.
- ❖ **Push your heels away from your legs**  
Stop and feel the new sensation.
- ❖ **Push your body into the support**  
Press into the mattress or back of the chair, not the seat. Feel that your body weight has been transferred to whatever is supporting it.
- ❖ **Push your head into the support**  
Stop pushing. Feel the weight of your heavy head totally supported.

❖ **Drag your jaw downwards**

If possible keep your mouth closed or it may get dry. When your teeth are comfortably separated and you feel your jaw heavy, stop. Feel the slackness of your cheeks and lips. Is your tongue fixed to the roof of your mouth? If so, gently take it down.

❖ **Close your eyes**

Your eyes may have already closed, if not, simply lower the top lids down over the eyes. Enjoy the darkness.

❖ **Imagine you are smoothing the area above your eyebrows up toward your hairline, over the top of your head and down the back of your neck.**

It is difficult to relax this muscle, as it does not control any joint. Try to think of this smoothing once or twice more.

❖ **Breathing**

If possible breathe in through your nose as it warms and filters the air passing through it. Take a breath, expanding forward and around the lower ribs and then breathe out again slowly and easily feeling your ribs fall inwards and downwards again. Do this without effort. Finally as you rest there you may choose to go over the sequence again or think of something pleasant. Do not let your mind wander and jump around.

❖ **Returning to full activity**

Gently move your fingers and toes. Have a stretch and perhaps a yawn. Do not hurry. Sit up slowly and wait a minute or two before standing.

❖ **Scan relax**

Throughout the day try to raise your awareness of tension by looking for signs.

## CHECK...

Are your shoulders held up?	Pull down.
Is your jaw clenched?	Drag down your mouth.
Is your tongue pressed to the roof of your mouth?	Let it float freely.
Are you clenching your hands?	Open, stretch, let go.

## **SUGGESTED WEB LINKS**

- ❖ [patient.info/health/anxiety/features/relaxation-exercises](http://patient.info/health/anxiety/features/relaxation-exercises)
- ❖ [www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/)
- ❖ [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/#.WzSvDCAna70](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/#.WzSvDCAna70)
- ❖ [www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm)

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