



Massage During Labour

Positions for massage

- Sitting astride a chair.
- Kneeling and leaning onto pillows/bean bags/partner in sitting position.
- Lying on side.
- On all fours supported by bean bags or pillows.
- Sitting on fit ball leaning onto table.

Massage oils

Olive oil, Sorbolene lotion and lavender oil are safe for pregnancy and labour.



Massage techniques

Stroking

The back

- Start with both hands at the top of the shoulders either side of the spine.
- Slowly stroke/run your hands down the back to the waist.
- Lift hands off and place hands slightly further out from spine and repeat.

Hands

- Firmly stroke the outside of the hands, the nerve endings in the hands will block out pain messages.

Abdomen

- Start with hands either side of the belly button; now stroke away the contractions out to the sides.

Kneading

Great for lower back pain in pregnancy

The back

- Place one hand on top of the other at the base of the spine and knead/pound gently in large circles.

Feet/Hands

- You can knead the bottom of the feet or palms with thumbs or fingertips, firmly. Large nerve endings in the feet and hands block out pain messages to the brain.

Petrissage/Picking up

The upper shoulder muscles

- Partners with your thumb and first finger gently squeeze and lift up the muscles on the top of the shoulder (the trapezius) work your way along the muscle. You can also work into the upper shoulder muscles using fingertips. Release any tight spots by pressing on them.



Scalp massage

Head

- With fingertips gently massage the scalp and base of neck.

More information

www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2870995 National Institute of Health. A good article on labour and massage.

<http://summaries.cochrane.org/CD009290/> An article about methods of managing pain during labour from a reputable website which is regularly updated.

For other helpful tips, please see:

- Coping Strategies for Labour
- TENS for Labour

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This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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