

HOMework GUIDE

This is not a strict guide on exactly what you have to do and when. Please consider what might work best for you, your body, your baby, and your family.

It is all optional and not essential to have a positive and empowering birth. You may choose to do some, none, or all of it.



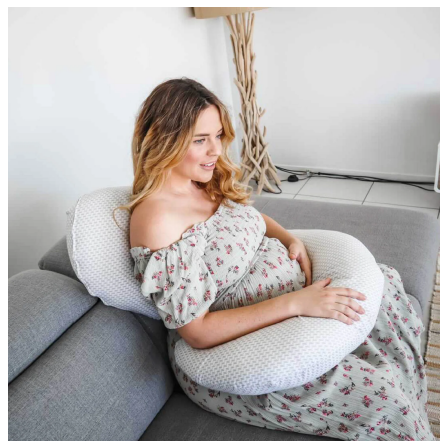
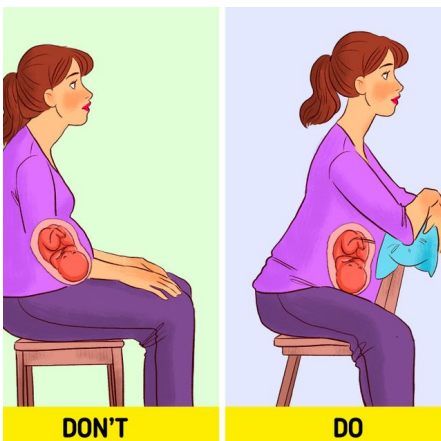
This is designed as a guide and advice only and should not be considered medical advice. Please speak with your pregnancy and birth care provider to receive information specific to you and your circumstances.

DAILY PRACTICE

(or almost daily depending on what you can manage)

Consistency is key when preparing and practicing for labour and postpartum. Don't aim for perfection, a little bit every day is far superior to perfection rarely.

- 1 minute of body awareness
 - Find a comfortable position, close your eyes, relax your jaw, shoulders, and buttocks. Scan your body for signs of tension. These may be places you would like to work on to release.
- diaphragmatic breathing
- horses breath
 - you can work on jaw release while doing this if you notice tension
- body stretches (see further resources for guided stretches and yoga)
- avoid reclining positions when possible - see images below
 - when sitting tilt your pelvis forward, have a pillow behind you to assist with this if needed, on the couch hug a pillow and lean forward or side recline, sit belly first in a bean bag (this can be hard to get out of!), or sit on a birth ball which can be supported by resting forward on a chair or table



FEW TIMES WEEKLY PRACTICE:

LEARN TO BE COMFORTABLE WITH BE UNCOMFORTABLE

- Use ice, a tennis ball on pressure points or wall squats (do this above a low chair or pillows) to practice your pain relief techniques
 - see a list of the techniques we covered in your other resources
- practice positions for labour, including partner positions together so you both get familiar, e.g.
 - hip squeeze
 - support squat
 - sacral pressure
 - robozo
 - light body touches up and down arms

IN YOUR 3RD TRIMESTER:

BOTH PARENTS TO READ:

This should not be skipped and so important for you both to read to head in a good mindset. Read it again and again if you need to.

[Rhea Dempsey: Crisis of confidence](#)

[Sarah Buckley - Pain In Labour: Your Hormones Are Your Helpers](#)

- Pack a bag in the car just in case your waters break
 - 2-3 thick towels, wet wipes, plastic bag for wet items, change of clothes (optional)
- Do a dry run to the hospital to know where to go
- Ask for a hospital tour (some hospitals also have virtual tours but it is better for your body when transitioning to being in a familiar place)

Consider attending a bodyworker

- Bodyworkers in pregnancy can be specialised physiotherapists, osteopaths, massage therapists, or midwives
- There is a wide variety on offer depending on what you need the provider you see
- If you are very physically fit, an athlete, horse rider, dancer, or have been told your baby is posterior after 36 weeks this might be particularly beneficial, however, it still holds great benefits for everyone

Make a Birth Plan / Map

It is very hard to plan a birth and have it go exactly as you imagine. However, it is important to have some strategies and guidelines on what is important for you, especially if fewer interventions are important for you. This is very helpful for your care provider to understand how to best look after you.

- at what stage you would consider certain interventions (anytime, never)
- what pain relief strategies are important, what do you want to avoid
- planning who you would like in your birth space
- creating your oxytocin-rich birth space

There is a great concept by Catherine Bell who coined the Birth Map. This is a guideline for if certain situations arise for you in labour or birth, what pathway would you like to go down. If you sign up for member access it is free, then go to the “Read The Birth Map” section and there is a great online booklet to guide you on decision-making for various situations.

<https://birthmap.life>

32 WEEKS

Raspberry Leaf Tea

- If you want to start drinking Raspberry Leaf Tea, between now and 34 weeks is considered the best time to start
- There is little evidence of the real benefits of this, but no risks have been found. Most resources suggest drinking 1-3 cups every day until labour commences.

35 WEEKS

Consider starting perineal massage

Here is a link on how to do it:

<https://myexpertmidwife.com/blogs/my-expert-midwife/why-you-should-do-perineal-massage-and-how-to-do-it>

Here is a link to a free resource you can download on how to reduce perineal trauma, (there are other great links here too):

<https://coreandfloor.com.au/pages/free-resources>

Dates

- If you want to begin consuming dates, now is considered the best time to start.
 - 6-7 dates every day until labour
- There is a small amount of evidence that suggests this can help soften the cervix and shorten labour times but more research is needed to make this conclusive.
- Please be considerate of your sugar intake when you are pregnant, especially if you have diabetes. You may like to consider also having fat with this to improve its absorption and reduce your blood glucose levels spiking as significantly.
- You may like to mix them in a recipe:
 - date balls
 - dates with goats or blue cheese
 - dates coated/dipped in dark chocolate

36 WEEKS

Expressing colostrum

- This is an evidence-based way to naturally encourage labour, and have some storage of colostrum for once your baby is born.
- Do not stress if you are unable to express any colostrum during pregnancy, this is normal for a lot of people, nipple stimulation is still beneficial
- See other resources in your pack on how to store expressed colostrum / breastmilk
- Here is a link on how to express
<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/antenatal-expressing>

TENS Machine

- Consider hiring and start practicing with your TENS machine
- Under *Brand Partners*, there are businesses that offer discounts for this hire
- Here is a link on how to use a TENS machine
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=gIV2s78ZC60>

Acupressure

- Practice and learn acupressure points
- You can now use them from 36 weeks. It is not recommended to use them beforehand due to some of them being thought to naturally encourage labour
- In your resource pack, you will find a guide to acupressure points for
 - encouraging labour (Birth Preparation using Acupressure)
 - pain relief during labour
 - self-stimulating acupressure points

Prepare for your postpartum

- pack your hospital bag - do this together so your partner knows where everything is
 - see other resources in your pack for a hospital bag checklist
- make meals ahead
- wash baby's clothes
- it is the time to wind down a busy life to get into the mindset for birth and nesting. If you're not already on maternity leave you may want to consider this soon
- start setting expectations with visitors after birth
- have cool pads ready in the freezer
 - lightly dampen with water
 - optional to add liquid witches hazel, arnica, or aloe vera for natural coolly and anti-inflammatory effects
- have everything you need ready for when baby arrives

Baby Car Seat

- Have your car seat installed this week, ready in time for baby's arrival
- There are services that will do this / check this to ensure it is safely installed

<https://kidsafeqld.com.au/child-car-seat-fitting/>

37 WEEKS

Miles Circuit

- This is a great set of movements to encourage your baby into an anterior (back towards the front) position, however, it is not the only thing you can do for this
- It is recommended to start slow and work up to 90 minutes per day
- Get familiar with your body and don't be afraid to feel your belly to work out where your baby might be

<https://www.milescircuit.com/the-circuit.html>

Spinning babies

- Here is a link to other techniques to encourage baby into the best position, especially if you have been told baby is posterior

<https://www.spinningbabies.com/pregnancy-birth/techniques/>

40 WEEKS

You may wish to engage in some natural methods of encouraging labour. Remember that it is completely normal to still be pregnant beyond 40 weeks. Your “due date” is not an eviction notice. For some people, it is normal to be pregnant even beyond 42 weeks. You may choose to do none of this and just wait for your body to be ready. Your healthcare providers may have a very good reason to be offering you an induction, sometimes before 40 weeks if there is a medical indication. This is information only and not healthcare advice, please talk to your providers about the best and safest options for you and your situation.

If an induction of labour is being offered to you, here are some resources for further learning:

- Research paper: [Intrapartum interventions and outcomes for women and children following induction of labour at term in uncomplicated pregnancies: a 16-year population-based linked data study](#)
- Research paper: [Labour Induction versus Expectant Management in Low-Risk Nulliparous Women](#)
- Podcast: [The Great Birth Rebellion Episode 3: Due dates](#)
- Podcast: [The Great Birth Rebellion Episode 33: Induction of Labour](#)
- Article: [Evidence Based Birth: Evidence On: Inducing for Due Dates](#)
 - this is a long albeit fantastic read. You may wish to pick out the subsections relevant to you and read the pros and cons section and conclusions
 - [This handout](#) gives a great visual representation of stillbirth rates to be better informed

Here are some suggestions for natural methods of encouraging labour if you choose to do this:

- Expressing colostrum
- Membrane sweep by a healthcare provider (less evidence now)
- Being active and mobile in varied and upright positions such as curbing walking, spinning babies, or miles circuit techniques to optimise baby's position
- Unprotected sex
- Orgasm
- Acupuncture or acupressure
- Being emotionally ready - let go (or reduce) fears and anxieties around birth, have everything ready in your home so your mind can feel prepared
- dates (start at 35 weeks)
- raspberry leaf tea (start at 32-34 weeks)