

TECHNIQUES TO ENHANCE LABOR CONTRACTIONS

Below is a list of many techniques used to stimulate contractions. Not all of these techniques have been researched for effectiveness, but all have been employed many times by women in labor. If labor is not progressing, it is helpful if the reason is known. If it is because the cervix is firm rather than soft, an open pelvis to allow the baby to descend will not help. If it is because the baby is in a posterior position, an open pelvis will help; but products which soften the cervix will not. In most cases, it is not known why labor may be sluggish in starting or progressing, and multiple approaches may be helpful.

POSITIONS

Open Pelvis

Allows expansion of pelvic bones

- ✓ standing
- ✓ kneeling upright
- ✓ all fours
- ✓ squatting

Anterior Force

Leaning forward allows gravity to strengthen the force of the contractions.

- ✓ all fours
- ✓ kneeling over birth ball
- ✓ bending over

#CASTOR OIL

#MINERAL OIL

Stimulates bowel and uterine contractions

#Used to induce labor in a woman not having contractions

MOVEMENT

Aids fetal descent

Strengthens contractions

Establishes rhythmic pattern

- ✓ walking
- ✓ swaying
- ✓ slow dancing
- ✓ bouncing gently on ball
- ✓ pelvic tilting
- ✓ rocking on all fours
- ✓ lunge
- ✓ pelvic cradle

HYGROSCOPIC DILATORS

Laminaria^{^*}

Lamicel^{^*}

Dilator placed in cervix. Fluids cause it to swell

PROSTA-GLANDINS

Hormone like substances that soften the cervix and strengthen contractions

#Semen

Ejected near cervix

#Evening Primrose Oil

Capsule swallowed or inserted in the vagina. Available at local pharmacies

Massage with cold pressed oil

#Gel^{^*}

Applied to cervix by MD. Repeat doses can be given.

#Pessary^{^*}

Device applied to cervix and left in place

#Cytotec^{^**}**

Vaginal med used every four to six hours

[^]Must be administered by physician's order

HERBS

#Black Cohosh*

Uterine tonic to initiate contractions

Blue Cohosh**

Stimulates contractions

#Pennyroyal*

Stimulates contractions

Red Raspberry Leaves

Strengthens contractions

#5W

Herbal combination

ESSENTIAL OILS

Clary Sage*

Precursor to estrogen

Jasmine

Uterine tonic
May be inhaled on cotton ball, dispersed through warm water, or applied at 5% in massage oil

OXYTOCIN

A natural hormone that causes the uterus to contract

Nipple Stimulation*

Causes release of oxytocin by the anterior pituitary

- ✓ fingers
- ✓ breast pump
- ✓ shower

#Clitoral Stimulation

Requires privacy

Both nipple and clitoral stimulation should be stopped during contractions.

#Pitocin^{^**}**

Given through IV
Induction and augmentation
Serious side effects

*Risks have been identified

A collaborative relationship with your health care provider is invaluable for providing safe and effective strategies to enhance labor.



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By Karen Newell

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AQUATHERAPY

Shower

Open pelvis
Relaxing sound
Breast Stimulation
May help early labor contractions establish active labor pattern

Immersion

Relaxing sound
"Aaah effect"

Immersion is more effective in a deep tub or pool that covers the belly.

Avoid spending more than 2 hours immersed prior to 6 cm dilatation.

Water Birth

Requires midwifery model of care

MASSAGE

Promotes relaxation

Increase circulation of hormones to the body

Focused Massage

Massage to a specific part of the body

- ✓ Back
- ✓ Face
- ✓ Arms/legs
- ✓ Hands
- ✓ Feet

Sequential Massage

Head to toe massage
Requires training
Break during contractions

BAG OF WATER

#Strip

Membranes^{^}**

Membranes are scraped

#Amniotomy^{^}**

Membranes are broken

SHIATSU

Stimulation of acupressure points

FAIA

(fa HEE u)
SP-6

Four Above Inner Ankle Bone

#Bony V

LI-4

V at joints of thumb and index finger

Use firm pressure throughout the contraction.

DOULAS

Trained attendants

Continuous support and comfort techniques

ABDOMINAL LIFTING

Promotes descent and rotation of baby

Helpful for back labor

Support behind the mother

Fingers clasped beneath belly, lift upward

Pelvic tilt through the contraction

Should only be done if mother is at place of delivery

TONING

Releases vagina

Vibrating hum

TUNING IN

Becoming sensitive to the different signals
Labor progress can be impeded if signals clash.

Inner Signals

Instinct or intuition?
Mind – body effect
Deepest feelings

"What does my body need now?"

"What am I feeling?"

Birth Art

Cognitive Signals

Thoughts and decisions
Higher centers of brain

"Do I agree or disagree?"

"What is best?"

Birth Plan

Voice of Others

Verbal & non/verbal
Their expectations

"What are they really saying?"

Communication skills

If Signals Clash

Nesting Space

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