

Goal

To increase participants' awareness of comfort measures that supports the woman in labour.

Objectives

By the end of the module, participants will be able to describe:

- The causes of pain in labour.
- How the birth environment affects pain perception.
- How comfort measures affect pain perception.
- The role of the labour support team.
- At least five types of comfort techniques.
- Strategies for managing back labour.
- Self-help strategies for the woman in labour.
- Various breathing techniques.
- Where to find more information.
- Their personal list of comfort measure strategies.

Comfort Measures Outline (45-60 minutes)

1. Introductions and housekeeping
2. Scenario: Anna and Domenic
3. Understanding labour pain
4. Importance of labour pain
5. Pain vs. Suffering
6. Gate control theory
7. Labour support
8. Comfort measures
9. Back labour
10. Breathing techniques
11. Birth video (optional)
12. Fun with ice activity or alternative
13. Informed choice
14. Local resources

Materials

- Laptop/computer and projector
- Labour Bag: A suitable bag with the following items:
 - CD of relaxing music
 - Rolling pin or pop can
 - Gel packs or rice sock (for application of heat)
 - Massage lotion or massage bar
 - Lip balm
 - Tennis ball
 - Candy/mints/lollipops (can be sugar-free for diabetic mothers)

- Snacks such as a granola bar
- Camera/batteries/memory card
- Deck of cards or magazine
- Swim suit for partner
- Money
- Wide shawl
- Birthing Ball *Comfort Positions* poster, Childbirth Graphics, 2004.
- Birthing ball
- Pelvic model and cloth doll
- Childbirth Graphics: *Positions for Labouring out of Bed* poster
- Hormonal Physiology of Childbearing: *Pathway to a Healthy Birth* Poster
<http://transform.childbirthconnection.org/reports/physiology/>
- Paper towels
- Ice cubes, freezies, clothes peg
- Optional: mats

Video Suggestions

- Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit (2013). *Comfort Measures for Labour*. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iw94EyVz3Rw>
- InJoy Birth and Parenting Education (2015). *Understanding Birth 3rd edition: Chapter Four - Comfort Techniques*.
- Mother's Advocate (InJoy Birth & Parenting Education, 2010). *Healthy Birth Your Way: Six Steps to a Safer Birth*, (2010). Available at <http://mothersadvocate.org/videos.html>
- Simkin, P. (2016). *The Essence of Coping in Labour and Birth 3Rs*. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Y-Li_r5IoE
- Simkin, P. (2015). *The Code Word - Ensure Your Pain Management Wishes Are Followed*, Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wiPAx0deTo&feature=youtu.be>
- Simkin, P. (2010). *Comfort Measures for Childbirth*.

Handouts

- Best Start Resource Centre. *Healthy Beginnings*, (5th Edition when available) or *A Healthy Start for Baby and Me (2016)**
- Best Start Resource Centre. (2016). *Prenatal Education Key Messages for Ontario: Labour Support Key Messages* PDF. Available at <http://www.ontarioprenataleducation.ca/labour-support/>
- Hormonal Physiology of Childbearing: *Pathway to a Healthy Birth*
<http://transform.childbirthconnection.org/reports/physiology/>
- Child Birth Experience. (2006). *Comfort Techniques-Releasing tension in the head, neck, shoulder, and back*. (included in module outline)
- *Event Training Schedule*, adapted by Virginia Collins from "Beginner Triathlon", copyright 2008.(included in module outline)

* Unless provided previously to participants

- *Guided Imagery Exercise: The Sea* (included in module outline)

References

British Columbia - Ministry of Health Services. (n.d.). *Baby's best chance*. Retrieved from www.bestchance.gov.bc.ca

Buckley, S. (2015). *Hormonal physiology of childbearing: Evidence and implications for women, babies, and maternity care*. Retrieved from <http://transform.childbirthconnection.org/reports/physiology>

Grey Bruce Health Unit. (2011). *Breathing techniques for pregnancy, labour and delivery*. Owen Sound, Canada: author

Prince Edward Family Health Team. (n.d.). *Labour comfort kit*. Belleville, Canada: author.

Simkin, P., Whalley, J., Keppler, A., Durham, J., & Bolding, A. (2010). *Pregnancy, childbirth and the newborn: The complete guide* (4th ed.). Minnetonka, MN: Meadowbrook Press

Simkin, P. (2007). *Comfort in Labor: How you can help yourself to a normal satisfying childbirth*. Retrieved from www.nationalpartnership.org/research-library/maternal-health/comfort-in-labor-simkin.pdf

Labour Bag Activity

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to encourage participants to think about what household items they could use to help the mother cope with labour.

Materials:

Labour support bag containing specified items (see first page of outline)

Instructions:

Pass the bag around the room and have participants pull out items one at a time and have them discuss what each item could be used for. Suggested uses are listed below, but participants may come up with other uses that are appropriate.

CD	A way to focus her attention and create a relaxing atmosphere.
Rolling pin/cold pop can	Provides a soothing rolling pressure for her lower back; some rolling pins are hollow and can be filled with ice for numbing the area (ensure there is a layer of cloth between her skin and the cold source).
Thermal bags/ gel packs/rice sock	Applying heat to the abdomen, back, or other sore areas can reduce the degree of pain (ensure there is a layer of cloth between her skin and the heat source). A sport sock filled with rice can be heated in the microwave.
Massage lotion or bar	Decrease friction on the skin during massage; some provide aromatherapy for relaxation. Avoid using a new brand of lotion, as there may be a reaction (ie. rash) or it may increase nausea.
Lip balm	Keeps her lips moist when doing breathing techniques.
Tennis ball	Provides counter pressure when rolled in small circles on her lower back; place two balls in a sock and roll on her lower back or have the pregnant woman roll the balls under her feet.
Sour candies, mints, lollipops	Helps moisten her mouth which can become very dry.
Snacks.	To maintain the partner's energy, and for the pregnant woman if appropriate.
Camera/batteries/memory card	For capturing important moments (with the health care provider's and pregnant woman's permission).
Magazine/cards	To provide distraction in early labour or to keep labour support people occupied if labouring woman is resting and does not want immediate support.
Swim suit	Some settings encourage partners to go into the shower and tub with the labouring woman.
Money	To pay for parking or incidentals.
Wide shawl	For abdominal lift. Demonstrate how to do this.

Massage Techniques

A good massage takes at least 15 minutes to perform. Once you become comfortable giving a massage you may find that you spend even longer doing it so make sure everyone is comfortable before starting.

Position the person receiving the massage in a comfortable position that allows you unrestricted access to the area that you are going to massage. Make sure that you are also comfortable and able to move freely. If you are massaging someone who is lying on their side, use pillows to put between their knees (and under their belly if they are pregnant) this helps keep the spine from twisting.

Strokes are usually done as a sweeping movement using the palms or heels of the hands. Circular strokes use the palms of the hand or the thumbs, raking strokes use the fingertips. Try to keep fingers together when stroking along the muscle. It keeps the pressure even and reduces the chance of provoking pain from uneven pressure of individual digits. Use massage oil or massage cream to prevent friction.

Working from the base of the neck, with hands on either side of the spine, begin to sweep your hands across the shoulders and out towards the sides of the body. Repeat the strokes across the back, dropping to a slightly lower level each time. Do the whole spine down to the tailbone.



Keep massage movements rhythmic and smooth with even steady pressure. Make the strokes balanced on both sides of the back. Do not use short rapid movements, as they cause friction, which can be painful.

Once you have completed that stroke, sweep hands back towards the spine using a light stroke. Always try to keep at least one hand in constant contact with the body. This allows you to be aware of any changes in tension and keeps the connection constant.

Gently check with your fingertips for signs of muscle tension. Where you find an area of tension, do not put pressure on it or try to force the area to relax. Using a circular motion and gradually increasing pressure begin working from the outer area of tension inward toward the center of the area. This may need to be repeated several times to get the area to relax. Once the area of tension has loosened up you can return to using the longer sweeping strokes to bring heat and blood into the area.

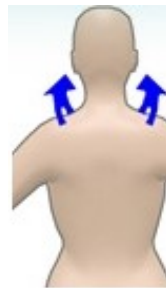


Once the muscles of the back have been massaged, you can begin to work the tiny muscles that lay just on either side of the backbone. Beginning at the base of the neck, gently feel for the top of the spine. Just on either side of the vertebrae, you will find the muscles that you are going to massage. Do not rub the spine directly as that can cause a great deal of pain.



Using your thumbs, make circular strokes to work the tiny muscles. Do this at each vertebra down to the base of the spine. Finish the massage by doing an all over sweeping stroke, working from the spine out towards the heart on both sides of the back.

To begin the shoulder massage, place a hand on each shoulder where it meets the base of the neck. Gently grasp the muscle in your hands and lift slightly, as if you are kneading dough. You can gently roll the shoulder muscle forward as you are lifting it. Remember to check with your partner for feedback. You may be able to knead the shoulder muscles more firmly as the massage progresses. Knead the shoulder muscle until you feel it loosen up and release its tension.



To finish the shoulders, use long sweeping strokes on either side of the base of the neck along the width of the muscle, always working out towards the sides. Stroke from the top of the shoulder blade to the bottom, just under the armpit. The heels of your hands work well for this stroke.

To massage the neck, position yourself so that you can let their head fall forward and rest in one of your hands. Gently use the kneading stroke (as with the shoulder massage) to loosen the tension in the muscles. Repeat this until the tension is gone and the muscles are loose. Once you have released the tension in the neck muscles, finish by using the sweeping stroke, working from the base of the skull down and out along the shoulders.

Return the head to its upright position before beginning to work on the scalp. Using the fingertips of both hands, lightly push or rake them into the scalp, as if you were giving a gentle shampoo. Work your fingers up from the base of the skull up to the top of the head. Repeat until scalp is relaxed. Be careful not to pull and hairs as you work the scalp.



Relieving tension and providing comfort benefits both parties, therefore giving and receiving feedback is important to ensure that your efforts are working.

This document has been created by The Childbirth Experience for reference purposes only. The information contained within is in no way intended as medical advice or as a substitute for medical and/or therapeutic treatment. If you are experiencing pain or discomfort please see for appropriate treatment.

The Childbirth Experience 2006

Labour Positions Activity

Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to encourage participants practice a variety of positions that could be used during labour to provide comfort for the labouring woman.

Materials:

- Birth balls
- Mats
- Pictures or posters of labour positions

Instructions:

- Clear out all tables and chairs to create an open space for participants to move around in.
- Either create stations for specific positions throughout the room, or allow participants to stay in one place to practice their positions of choice.
- Using the graphic on the PPP, or the posters you have placed around the room, encourage participants to work with their support person to practice the positions discussed in the PPP.
- Provide feedback to participants as required.

Preparing for Birth is Like Preparing for a Competition

Vary your training

- Don't just run in preparation for the event.
- Use several different methods to train i.e. cycling, walking, yoga, weight lifting. This will ensure that your whole body gets a workout creates more balance.
- Don't forget to train your mind as well for the event.

Prepare your mind for the race

- Attitude is important for success. A positive attitude will help you overcome obstacles such as fatigue and fear of failure.
- Determination to achieve your goals will keep you focused on success when facing obstacles.
- Visualize yourself achieving success. See yourself facing and overcoming obstacles.

Pace yourself

- Know yourself and understand how to and when to push past your fears.
- Believe in your own ability to know your body and what it is capable of.
- Make sure you run your own race at, in your own time and at your own speed.
- Don't be afraid to slow down when you need to rest.

Take care of yourself

- Remember to keep well-nourished prior to the event. Give your body foods that are high in energy so that it has what it needs to keep you going.
- Keep well hydrated during the event so that your muscles work efficiently.
- If you need help, ask for it; don't be afraid to admit that you are not a machine.

Have your stuff ready

- Make sure that you have all your supplies ready and available for you during the event.
- Make sure that you have a backup plan to deal with any circumstances which may arise (i.e., adverse weather).
- Make sure you have discussed your plans with your support people so that they know how to help you achieve your goal.

Enjoy yourself

- Don't worry about the end of the event.
- Focus on how well you are taking care of yourself and how this will improve your overall wellbeing.
- Remember that the event is only one day. It is the training that went into it is what will last.

Adapted by Virginia Collins from "Beginner Triathlon", copyright 2008