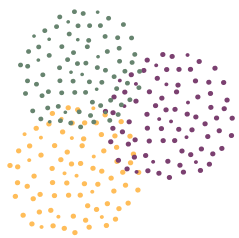


# guide to balance & movement



- exercises for the 3rd trimester
- movements in labor
- stages of the pelvis



# Welcome!

This guide was compiled by the Ithaca Doula Collective to be a resource for pregnancy and labor support during the Covid-19 global pandemic when physical doula and practitioner access may be restricted due to distancing and quarantine.

However, the majority of this information is applicable at all times. Resources can be found on the last page, and you are always welcome to visit our website or contact us directly for more information.

[www.IthacaDoulaCollective.com](http://www.IthacaDoulaCollective.com)

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In some ways birth is a dance between your bones and your baby's bones. Your movement habits, the baby's position in utero, and tension in your muscles can impact how comfortable you feel in pregnancy and how easeful your delivery is (easeful not, easy).

**Here is the excellent news:** *There is so much you can do to influence this!*

In this document you are going to learn common signs from your body that you could use some more balance, some daily movements that will help create that balance, and some ideas for each stage of labor.

## **Invitations from your body indicating that you need more balance**

- a. **Pregnancy Pain!** While aches and pains are common, they aren't normal. Use pain as a signal that you need massage, movement or rest.
- b. **Late Babies.** While when your baby arrives is up to your baby, a baby that is able to ease-fully settle down next to your cervix will trigger a timelier birth date.
- c. **In Labor:** Contractions that start and stop, irregular contraction patterns, intense labor with not much descent, your cervix isn't making regular change, you stop dilating at 9 ½ cm, and pain that is more intense than you'd expect at that stage of labor are all "invitations to act" by supporting your body with stretching or balancing movements.

## **Movements that help you create comfort and ease once in the 3rd trimester**

*\*videos are chosen because they are short and show the desired movements, we have no affiliations to any of the teachers, nor do we implicitly endorse them.*

- **Walk daily: 2-5 miles/day**

Think of all the ways your pelvis has to move to help you walk! Not only is walking good for your pelvis, it is a great way to maintain health in your pregnancy. Any walking is better than no walking, so don't judge yourself if it isn't a long walk.

- **High Squats: 5-30 a day**

<https://youtu.be/aclHkVaku9U>

Notice her knees are over her feet, she is untucking her pelvis, and she isn't squatting deeply- which isn't advised until you know baby is in a favorable birthing position. Squats are for strength and to stretch your pelvic floor between your sitz bones. They don't have to be deep to be effective.

- **Calf stretch/Posterior Leg Stretch: 30 seconds a leg 3-5 times a day**

<https://youtu.be/XZIWn4o3uNw>

[https://youtu.be/eF\\_BqlFmFm8](https://youtu.be/eF_BqlFmFm8)

Calf stretching can help with the common leg cramps, but also the fascia of your calf connects to your hamstrings and that connects into your pelvic floor. A tight back of the leg can pull your pelvis back and impact how a baby can nest into it. Plus- it feels good for all of us who sit for much of the day.

- **Pelvic Tilts (Cat/Cow): 20-30/day with deep breathing**

<https://youtu.be/LympZqVz14s> (on hands and knees)

<https://youtu.be/SlzYz7SQns4> (seated – can also be done standing or on a birth ball)

Pelvis tilts or cat/cow are great to help stretch the fascia of the front and the back of your body. This movement can also be used to explore all directions of your spine. Can you roll your hips? Shift your hips from left to right? Rock forward and back? Be playful and seek pleasure! This is also a great way to ease any low back pain and help baby nestle into the pelvis.

- **Ball Squeeze/Fist squeeze: squeeze for a count of 10 for 3 repetitions**

<https://youtu.be/nS5IEe9t-Qc>

You can put a yoga block, a ball, or two fists between your knees to do this exercise. The goal is to keep your glutes soft and squeeze with your inner thighs (adductors). This will help stabilize your pubic bone.

- **\* Seated Figure Four: 30 seconds a side/2-3 times a day**

<https://youtu.be/2E8WWX4cOc4>

This is a great stretch for your outer hip, especially if you are having piriformis pain and sciatica. Make sure you sit tall in your seat and have a straight spine as you lean forward.

- **\* Psoas Stretch: 3 each side/day**

<https://youtu.be/D2iIppygImI> (standing)

<https://youtu.be/GGE462dJhd8> (kneeling)

<https://youtu.be/HuPgLUyPWcA> (Supine. If you want to deepen this stretch, lay on your bed and let your lengthened leg dangle off the end of the bed)

Your psoas muscle is a major hip flexor that goes from your deep abdomen/low back, swoops into your pelvis and then attaches to your leg. On most people who sit and drive a lot, this is tight. Your baby has to slide down this muscle to settle into your pelvis, so it is a nice one to have released. If this pulls your groin- use the supine stretch only.

- **Meditation/deep breathing/daydreaming: 20 min/day**

Birth isn't just about movement, it is also about mindset and feeling safe in your body. To help with this, fill out the worksheet on Exploring your Needs in Labor. But as a daily activity, can you find time to mediate, journal, day dream, listen to your breath, draw or color, dance- something that helps you cultivate a safe embodied feeling.

- **\* If you have public symphysis instability - avoid these movements**

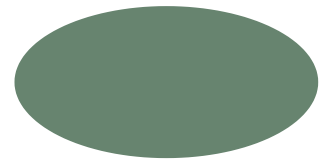
## The stages of the pelvis

In labor, we look for a few different pieces of information to assess progress.

One is your labor pattern increasing in length, strength and frequency. Another is seeing cervical change. The last is assessing baby's descent through the pelvis. Most pelvises are wider left to right in the inlet, have a diagonal orientation in the mid-pelvis and wider front to back in the outlet. To help your labor progress more comfortably, you can move your body in the following positions to make more space for your baby to move through.

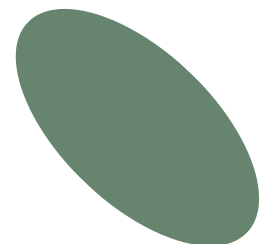
**Inlet:** Movements to help baby engage if they are “HIGH” (typically early labor)

- Rolling your hips in circles on a birth ball
- Figure 8 movements in your hips
- Abdominal Lift and Tuck (<https://spinningbabies.com/learn-more/techniques/other-techniques/abdominal-lift/>)
- Sit with your knees apart/feet together to open the top of the pelvis



**Mid-pelvis:** Movements to help a baby rotate through the pelvis floor (typically active labor and transition)

- Keep knees parallel with feet to open the mid-pelvis
- Lay down with your bottom leg straight and your top leg on a peanut ball (runner's position)
- Lunge one leg out at a 45-degree angle from the body with your foot on a chair/stool, or while you are kneeling.



- (Lunges are also a great position for pushing if you suspect your baby is asynclitic)
- Have your partners push on your sitz bones while you are on your hands and knees. (<https://spinningbabies.com/learn-more/techniques/other-techniques/cook-counter-pressure/>)

### Outlet: Movements to help a baby out (typically pushing)

- Squat with a squat bar, or even sitting backwards on a chair or toilet
- Sitting on the toilet with your feet on a stool/squatty potty
- Having your knees closer together together and feet wider apart while sitting, standing, or on your hands and knees

### Want to learn more?

- Daily Essentials Streaming and Digital  
Download: [spinningbabies.ontraport.com/t?orid=43100&opid=26](https://spinningbabies.ontraport.com/t?orid=43100&opid=26)
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