

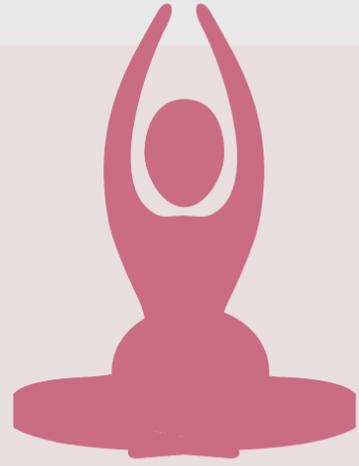
PAIN COPING STRATEGIES



They don't call it labor for nothing. Having a baby is hard work, and part of that work is getting through the pain. But don't panic. There are more ways than ever to manage that pain, and you don't have to choose just one. The trick is to have as many tools in your bag as possible

1 RELAXATION

The most important thing you can relax during labor is your mind. The idea is simple – when you fear pain, you tense up, which makes the pain worse, which makes you tense up more.



2 PRACTICE RHYTHMIC BREATHING

Breathing techniques can help you manage contractions. Breathe fully in a slow rhythm during contractions. Release tension with each exhalation and try moaning. Also try taking quick breaths, about one every 2 to 3 seconds (20 to 30 per minute). If you lose your rhythm, your partner can help you regain it with eye contact, rhythmic hand or head movements, or by talking you through contractions.

3 MOVING AROUND

Walking, swaying, changing positions, and rolling on a birthing ball can not only ease the pain but can help your labor progress by using the force of gravity to your advantage and encouraging the movement and rotation of the baby down through the pelvic canal.

4 TAKE A WARM SHOWER OR BATH

A warm shower can soothe you, especially if you can sit on a stool and direct a handheld shower head onto your abdomen or back. Bathing in warm water may relax you—and it may even speed up labor.

5 MASSAGE

Massage may be a bit of an understatement when it comes to the kind of pressure most women need for relief during labor



6 USE IMAGERY AND VISUALIZATION

Focus on something that makes you happy (like your partner's face, an inspirational picture or favorite object) to engage your senses and decrease your awareness of pain. Listen to music, a soothing voice or a recording of ocean waves, and picture yourself somewhere that's relaxing to you.

7 SEEK RELIEF WITH WARM OR COOL COMPRESSES

Place a warm pack on your lower abdomen, groin, lower back, or shoulders during labor. Fill a long sock with uncooked rice and heat it in the microwave for about one minute, then place it on your abdomen (make sure it's not too hot). If it gets cold, reheat it in the microwave.

8 TRY ACUPRESSURE

Use acupressure to help ease pain by pinching the fleshy part of your hand between the thumb and index finger. Don't do this before you go into labor, though, as it can also stimulate contractions.

