



Optimal foetal positioning

The baby's head and back are the heaviest parts of their body. They will naturally gravitate towards the lowest side of the mother's abdomen. If your tummy is lower than your back, e.g. you are sitting on a chair leaning forward; the baby's back will tend to shift towards your tummy. If your back is lower than your tummy, e.g. you are lying on your back or leaning back in an armchair, the baby's back may move towards your back.

Avoid positions which encourage your baby to face your tummy such as lolling back in armchairs, sitting in car seats where you are leaning back or anything where your knees are higher than your pelvis.

The best way to do this is to spend lots of time kneeling upright, or sitting upright, or on hands and knees. When you sit on a chair, make sure your knees are lower than your pelvis, and your trunk should be tilted slightly forwards.

- Watch TV while kneeling on the floor, over a beanbag or cushions, or sit on a dining chair. Try sitting on a dining chair facing (leaning on) the back as well.
- Use yoga positions while resting, reading or watching TV.
- Sit on a wedge cushion in the car, so that your pelvis is tilted forwards. Keep the seat back upright.
- Don't cross your legs! This reduces the space at the front of the pelvis, and opens it up at the back. For good positioning, the baby needs to have lots of space at the front.
- Don't put your feet up! Lying back with your feet up encourages posterior presentation.
- Sleep on your side, not on your back.
- Avoid deep squatting, which opens up the pelvis and encourages the baby to move down, until you know he/she is the right way round.
- Swimming with your belly downwards is said to be very good for positioning babies (not backstroke) but lots of breaststroke and front crawl. Breaststroke in particular is thought to help with good positioning, because all those leg movements help open your pelvis and settle the baby downwards.
- A Birth Ball can encourage good positioning, both before and during labour.
- Various exercises done on all fours can help, e.g. wiggling your hips from side to side, or arching your back like a cat, followed by dropping the spine down



If your baby is already posterior

First of all, don't panic! Most posterior babies will turn in labour, but read on to find ways of helping him or her turn before. Even if your baby does not turn and remains back to back it is not necessarily a bad thing.

When your baby is in a posterior position, you can try to stop him/her from descending lower. You want to avoid the baby engaging in the pelvis in this position, while you work on encouraging them to turn around. Most babies take a couple of days to turn around when the mother is working hard on positioning so don't be disheartened if it doesn't happen right away.

- Avoid deep squatting.
- Use the 'knee to chest' position. When on hands and knees, stick your bottom (butt) in the air, to tip the baby back up out of your pelvis so that there is more room for him to turn around.
- Sway your hips while on hands and knees.
- Crawl around on hands and knees. A token 5 minutes on your hands and knees is unlikely to do the trick – you need to keep working at this until your baby turns. Try crawling around the carpet for half an hour - while watching TV or listening to music. It is good exercise as well as good for the baby's position!
- Don't put your feet up! Lying back with your feet up encourages posterior presentation.
- Swim belly-down, but avoid kicking with breaststroke legs as this movement is said to encourage the baby to descend in the pelvis. You can still swim breaststroke, but simply kick with straight legs instead of "frogs' legs".
- Try sleeping on your tummy, using lots of pillows and cushions for support.

When your baby turns to an anterior position, you can encourage him to descend further into the pelvis – by walking around upright, massaging your bump downwards, deep squatting, and swimming – and now you can use lots of breaststroke "frogs' legs" kicking.

