

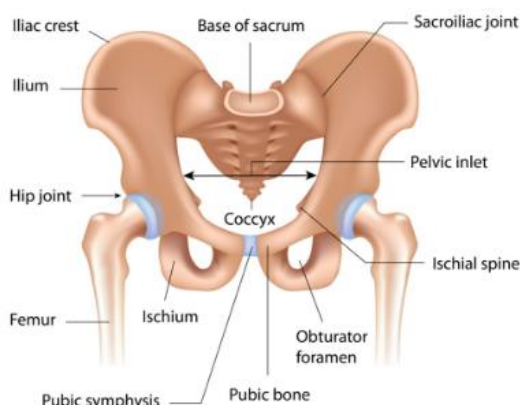
Freedom of movement in labour

April 2024

Why freedom to move in labour is important

Many women expect that they will have to sit or lie on the bed in labour, because they may have seen images on television or in the media depicting this. Your midwives will support you to move freely in labour and adopt different positions according to what is comfortable for you. This means it is more likely your labour will progress well towards a vaginal birth; you will be less likely to need interventions to give birth or need drugs to manage your pain.

Women who have freedom of movement in labour report higher levels of satisfaction because they are more comfortable and have a better sense of choice and control during the labour process. Comfort, choice and control are important, they help you to feel safe and enable your body to produce hormones such as oxytocin and endorphins, supporting your emotional well-being and helping your uterus to contract.



This is an image of a female pelvis. The blue areas in this image depict the ligaments between your bones.

Due to a hormone you are producing in pregnancy called 'relaxin', these ligaments will soften and stretch as you get closer to giving birth, creating more space for your baby. Your tailbone (or sacrum) will also open out to make space for your baby's head to pass through, however, you need to make space for this to open by avoiding sitting on your tailbone. The position you choose can make up to 30% difference in the space available to your baby. As the baby rotates and descends throughout labour, the shape of the space they need may change.

The best approach is to follow what your body is telling you about how you would like to move and position yourself. Your midwife may also make suggestions, based on the observations and the progress of your labour.

There are very few reasons why your movement may be restricted. If you are being continuously monitored, you can request wireless monitoring. If you have an epidural, you will need to stay on the bed, however, you can use a peanut ball or pillows to optimise the space your baby has to pass through your pelvis, and you will be encouraged to change position frequently.

Remember.....

Whatever you decide, the team at The Royal Hospital for Women will support your decision and care for you and your baby safely.

Endorsed April 2024. Reviewed by clinicians and consumers in development stage.

Should you wish to discuss any aspect of this information please send an email to RHWfeedback@health.nsw.gov.au