



# NON-PHARMACOLOGIC PAIN MANAGEMENT IN LABOUR

In addition to medications and procedures that we can use to reduce labour pain in hospital, many simple non-medical strategies can provide extra relief.

## BREATHING TECHNIQUES

- **Slow Breathing:** inhale deeply through the nose, then exhale slowly through the mouth.
- **Patterned Breathing:** inhale for a count of 4, then exhale for a count of 6.
- **Pant-Pant-Blow:** short breaths followed by a longer exhale.



## HYDROTHERAPY

Hydrotherapy is when you are immersed in warm water during your labor.

Methods to use hydrotherapy include:

- **Shower:** water is directly showered onto the back or abdomen.
- **Bath:** you are immersed in warm water, which can be calming and comforting.



## POSITION CHANGES

Changing your position can help reduce pain and encourage labour progression.

- **Standing or walking:** uses gravity to help the baby descend.
- **Squatting:** opens the pelvis and can reduce back pain.
- **Hands and knees:** Relieves back pressure and promotes fetal rotation.



## SUPPORT PERSON

Emotional and physical support can significantly reduce pain perception.

Physiologically, comfort measures and encouragement can actually decrease the production of **catecholamines** (which are our stress 'fight or flight' hormones) and facilitate the progression of labour.



**Note:** There are many options that don't involve medication. These options not be as effective with respect to pain relief for some people. The pain management plan in labour for each person is different. You may also change your plan during labour. Speak to your health care provider to learn more about your options.

### References

Bonapace J, Gangé G-P, Chaillet N, et al. Guideline No. 355-Physiologic Basis of Pain in Labour and Delivery: An Evidence-Based Approach to its Management. J Obstet Gynaecol Can 2018;40(2):227-245

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