

# Birth Ball

The birthing ball is a physical therapy ball that is an essential comfort tool to help women get into positions that help labor progress.

In an active birth it is essential to have comfortable support in upright positions. These positions also maximise the help of gravity, helping the baby to descend as easily as possible through the pelvis. When sitting, the softness of the ball also absorbs the mother's weight and helps to prevent and relieve back strain. The soft round contour of the ball is very comfortable to sit on and because there's no back rest to get in the way, it's ideal if the mother wants her partner to hold her or to massage her back.

Sitting on the ball encourages a natural swaying or rotating motion of the pelvis, promoting fetal descent. The ball provides perineal support without a lot of pressure and helps keep the fetus aligned in the pelvis. The sitting position assumed on the ball, similar to a squat, opens the pelvis, helping to speed up labor. Gently moving on the ball helps with the pain of contractions. In addition, this sitting position allows the doula or support person to provide massage or counter-pressure to the back of the laboring mom. With the ball placed on the bed, the mother can stand and lean into it. With the ball on the floor or bed, the mother can kneel and lean over the ball. The mother's weight is supported entirely by the ball and the doula or support person has excellent access to the mother's back for massage and counter-pressure.

When using the ball, the mother remains barefoot or wears non slip socks. She first holds the ball with her hand as she sits down. Her support person stands behind her as she first sits on the ball until she feels stable. Her feet are flat on the floor approximately 2 feet apart to help stabilize her. She may then place her hands on her knees and gently rock her pelvis back and forth and side to side.



*Sutter Davis  
Hospital*

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