

Taking good care of yourself, including eating healthy and nutritious food, being active, having good outlets for stress release and getting appropriate sleep, are extremely helpful for pregnancy, labour and birth and the postpartum period. We have a few additional ideas that may help prepare the body and mind to optimize a birth experience and may help to avoid going well past one's due-date.

From the 2nd trimester onwards:

- Herbs: nutritive herbal teas can help supply the body with essential minerals and vitamins and support healthy pregnancies. Many local health food stores supply tea blends (eg *Growing Belly Tea*) intended for pregnant mamas which are considered safe and contain herbs such as red raspberry leaf, oatstraw, nettles and lemon balm.
- Acupuncture: helpful with many pregnancy discomforts and preparing the body for birth.
- Massage and/or Cranio-Sacral Therapy: good for pregnancy aches and pains to promote relaxation.
- Chiropractic: helps align the spine and pelvis optimally, also good for back, neck and hip aches.
- Preparing mentally for birth may help to allow you to surrender into labour when the time comes. Preparation for many expecting parents includes booking prenatal classes (or refresher classes if this is not your first baby!) and hiring a doula.

From the 3rd trimester onwards:

- Promoting good positioning of baby: babies who are in the "anterior position", which means that their back is more toward mom's belly button rather than her spine, can more easily engage into the pelvis, put pressure against the cervix and promote cervical change at the right time in late pregnancy.



To help babies into an anterior position, consider the following:

- Prenatal Yoga
- Using forward leaning positions throughout the day and evening: sit on an upright chair facing backwards, sit on an exercise ball; try to avoid sinking back positions with the knees above the hips, for example in recliner chairs or deep couches.
- Anything that allows you to be in a hands and knees position – washing the floor or gardening is great!
- Look at the information on the website www.spinningbabies.com for fetal positioning techniques.
- Sex: female orgasm releases oxytocin, which tones the uterus. For women with male partners, semen contains hormones which help to ripen the cervix.

From 36 weeks onwards:

- Evening Primrose Oil: Taken both orally (1000mg) in the morning and intravaginally (1000mg) before bed, pushed up as close to your cervix as you can reach (remember to use a panty-liner).
- Herbs: red raspberry leaf (if you haven't already been taking it), 3-4 cups per day. Some herb or health food stores also blend teas or tinctures to prepare for labour and birth. We suggest the *9th Month Tea* from Gaia Gardens on West Broadway in Vancouver.