

Relaxation of your pelvic floor to prepare for birth

One of the most important exercises you can do in your final trimester from about 30 weeks leading up to the birth of your baby especially if you are planning a vaginal birth is to practise relaxing your pelvic floor muscles.

Labour and delivery is an emotionally charged time and often your pelvic floor muscles will instinctively contract. Learning techniques to help relax your pelvic floor muscles to help aid the transition through labour will improve birth outcomes.

Below are some 'let-go' techniques and visualisations you can try to help prepare your pelvic floor muscles for labour which you may also use during labour too:

- The ripple effect: visualise a pebble dropping into a tranquil pond of water and the outward ripples it makes, visualise this happening within your pelvis and vagina allowing your pelvic floor muscles to drop down like the pebble and widen out like the ripples.
- Visualise sitting on a toilet to urinate or push out wind, feel the muscles relax and let go.
- Visualise your pelvic floor as a flower blooming and opening



Combine these exercises with your connection breath

- As you inhale, visualise your diaphragm expanding downward, feel as this increases the downward pressure in your belly all the way down to your pelvic floor muscles and allow them to relax and lengthen.
- An extra step on from this is to use this breath and on your exhale contract your lower core muscles (transverse abdominals, TVA) and again allow your pelvic floor to relax, lengthen and expand (yes you are going to stop activating you pelvic floor on your exhales now during these breathing exercises). Relax your TVA's on the inhale.

Additional techniques for preparing your pelvic floor muscles for birth include:

- Perineal massage, ask your midwife about this.
- You may also like to consider hypnobirthing, a self-hypnosis technique to help you stay relaxed during labour.