

## THE POWER OF TOUCH

Massage stimulates your body to release endorphins, it's the natural pain-killing, mood-lifting chemicals produced in the brain. Endorphins are responsible for the high that you feel after exercise, or after a good bout of laughter.

In labour, massage strengthens connection with your care team, perhaps your midwife, doula and birth partner. Massage may ease pain and reduce anxiety during labour and birth. Essential oils can be a great addition to labour also. Certain blends are proven to reduce anxiety and ease relaxation. Please ensure any oils are safe for pregnancy & do a patch test!



A positive mindset can make a huge difference on your perception of pain. GentleBirth or Hypno-birthing are brilliant tools.

**“I can do anything for a minute.”**

**“I am calm, confident and in control.”**

**“I am safe, supported and loved.”**

## INFORMED Decision Making

When an unexpected situation arises try to remember you have the right to informed consent or refusal. If there is time, ask questions to decide what the right thing for you and your birth is.

### Remember to use your **BRAIN**

What are the **Benefits?**

What are the **Risks?**

Are there any **Alternatives?**

What are my gut **Instincts** telling me?

What if I wait and do **Nothing?**

For information on Birth & Postpartum Doula support, antenatal and parenting courses  
[info@doulacare.ie](mailto:info@doulacare.ie)

Leaflet by DoulaCare Ireland, providing Birth & Postpartum Doula support Nationwide with the highest professional standards. Garda Vetted & Insured. Benefits also available through Irish Life Health.

[www.doulacare.ie](http://www.doulacare.ie)

## COMFORT & PAIN MANAGEMENT

for Labour & Birth



Positive thinking can help you have a shorter more enjoyable labour experience.

**AFFIRMATIONS**

**VISUALISATIONS**

**VISION BOARDS**

**MUSIC / BIRTHING TRACKS**

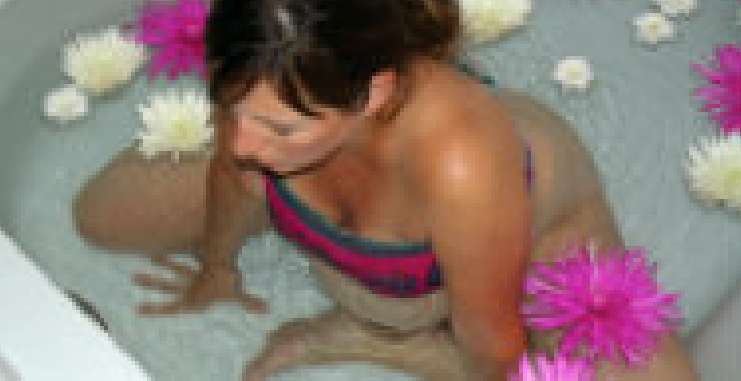
**DoulaCare**  
IRELAND

Knowledge - Encouragement - Support

# OPTIONS DURING LABOUR

## Stay Upright, Forward & Open (UFO)

Research shows that moving during labour helps your baby to move into a good birthing position and helps your cervix to dilate faster. So walk, sway, dance, bounce on your birth ball, rock from side to side follow what your body is telling you.



### Using water: A bath, birthing pool or shower

**Pros:** Reduces the need for pain relief. Allows freedom of movement, Buoyancy helps to relieve pressure, Heat helps to relax muscles and ease tension

**Cons:** There is not always access to a pool / bath in a hospital setting. Water must be the right temperature to be effective in pain relief.

### T.E.N.S (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation)

An electrical device that sends a small electrical input to your muscles through pads on your skin to release endorphins & ease discomfort during contractions. Use at home or in hospital but not in water. It's a great tool to have for early labour. Buy or rent them from pharmacies online.



Hot or Cold packs are also a great tool. You can even use a facecloth (run under a hot or cold tap)

**Pethidine** is a strong morphine like narcotic given by injection into the thigh or buttock. It takes effect within 20 minutes and lasts for 2-4 hours.

**Pros:** Changes awareness and may help the mother relax. Does not slow down established labour. Can be given by midwife within 5 minutes of requesting it

**Cons:** Can't control it once it's given. Doesn't significantly reduce labour pain. Can cause nausea, vomiting and a drop in blood pressure. Women are offered an anti-nausea drug at the same time to prevent sickness. Feelings of sleepiness and disorientation can make it hard to move around. Passes through to the baby & stays in their em for up to 5 days

**Gas & Air (entonox)** Is a mixture of laughing gas (nitrous oxide) and oxygen that is inhaled through a mask or mouthpiece at the beginning of each contraction (surge). It starts working within a few seconds of inhalation and lasts for up to 1 minute.

**Pros:** Can be given in any position (including the bath/pool). Mother is in control of the dose. Effects wear off after a few minutes. Can be taken at any stage of labour & birth. Available in hospital & home birth

**Cons:** Doesn't provide total pain relief (takes the 'edge off'). Mother may feel light headed or nauseous

**Epidural** is a local anesthetic (anesthetic and narcotic mix) injected in the lower back in the "epidural space" through a fine plastic tube, which is left in place for top-ups by the mother or midwife (or it is continuous). Initially given by an anesthesiologist. It numbs and weakens the lower part of the body from the waist down.

**Pros:** Gives total pain relief to 85% of women (partial or no relief to 15%). Women can remain alert & it can offer a chance for them to think clearly about their options. Can allow you to rest if at point of exhaustion.

**Cons:** Significantly higher chance of further interventions (Syntocinon drip, episiotomy, vacuum, forceps, Caesarean). Greatly reduces the urge to push. restricts movement (which can be needed to move baby down). Lowers blood pressure for some women. Some women shake/shiver after receiving the epidural