

Birth Ball Basics

Birth balls can be invaluable for use during pregnancy, labour and afterwards, especially for those with back, shoulder or pelvic pain. Many maternity units now provide them for use during labour.

The benefits and uses

In Pregnancy

The Ball can be used for yoga, exercise or to sit on instead of a chair. Sitting on the ball will strengthen pelvic and postural muscles, help to relieve back and pelvic pain.



Kneeling on the floor you can lean your upper chest over the ball and either:

- have your back horizontal. You can circle your hips. This can be a relaxing position to ease backache, and avoids tension and weight on the wrists, or
- ease your hips down towards your heels. If you get squashed legs in this position then place a couple of cushions, a small stool or a pile of books under your bottom.



Resting and relaxing in all these positions will encourage the weight of the baby's spine to lie in the curve of your belly muscles. This is important in the last 6 weeks of pregnancy, when you are encouraging the baby into the best position for birth (that is with your baby's back towards the front of your belly).

Sitting or squatting on the floor, you can use the ball as a firm, but comfortable support behind you. Sit or squat with the ball between your back and the wall.

In Labour

The Ball is a valuable tool for Active Birth, relaxation and massage.

- Sitting on and swaying
- Kneeling on the floor and relaxing over the ball (with plenty of padding under the knees)
- Standing and leaning over the ball placed on a bed
- Squatting with the ball between your back and the wall



These positions encourage upright, open postures, free movement and unrestricted breathing to release tension, so helping your baby to move down the birth canal more quickly and easily.

After the birth

Sitting on the ball, gently rocking and circling the hips along with gentle stretching exercises has many benefits: -

- Speeds recovery and healing by stimulating the circulation in the pelvic area
- Strengthens the core postural muscles, (pelvic floor, abdominal and back muscles)
- Helps to realign the spine
- Corrects any structural imbalances



Holding your baby, whilst gently rocking on the ball can help soothe a crying baby and be less tiring than standing.

As you feel stronger you can build up your exercise routine, using the ball in many different ways to improve general fitness. There are plenty of instruction manuals, DVDs and classes etc. to help you find a suitable exercise programme when you feel ready for it.

What size ball do you need?

Balls come in various sizes. For the average sized person a 65cm ball is usually most suitable. However, larger or smaller balls are available for women over 5'9" or below 5'1".

I sell 65 cm balls in my classes, and also some lovely furry covers for them, which make them both soft and huggable, and also look great!

During pregnancy and for labour:

As you sit on the top of the ball, place your feet firmly on the floor, hip width apart and parallel. Your hips should be slightly higher than your knees, to the point where you can still keep your heels firmly down and 'grounded' in any seated movement.



After your baby is born, you can deflate the ball a little until your hips are level with your knees –this is the recommended height for most exercises involving sitting.

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