

How to Turn Your Breech Baby to a Head Down Position

What happens if I have a 'breech' baby?

Most babies get into their birthing position at around 32 weeks. They usually choose to have their head down in their mother's pelvis, because it's the 'best fit'. However some babies choose to sit or stand with their bottoms or feet in their mother's pelvis. This is called a **breech presentation**.

This has important implications when it comes to labour and birth because most caregivers and most hospitals are not prepared to offer vaginal deliveries for breech babies. This is partly because of a perception of increased risk, and partly because caregivers are no longer trained to manage vaginal breech deliveries.

If your baby is breech at 34-36 weeks, you have several choices:

- Do what you can to encourage your baby to turn.
- Ask your caregiver to organize an 'external cephalic version' – where an obstetrician attempts to massage your baby into a head down position.
- Attempt a vaginal breech delivery at BC Womens hospital in Vancouver.
- Plan a C-section at your local hospital.

What can I do to help my baby turn?

Here are some of the things you can try to coax your baby to turn 'on its own'.

Breech Tilt

This involves having the mother get into positions where her hips are higher than her shoulders. It works by changing the forces of gravity on the baby, helping the baby's bottom or feet to get out of the pelvis, and giving it room to turn around. There are several variations on this exercise – pick the one that feels best and most effective to you.

1. Slant Board

Place an ironing board or a 1/2 sheet of plywood (cut lengthwise) with one end on the floor and the other end on a sturdy chair about 24" high. Put something soft (a folded blanket) over it, and have the mother lie down on her back with her head down and her hips up, knees bent so her stomach muscles are relaxed. Do this for 10 minutes, three to four times a day.

2. Knee-chest Pose

Have the mother get on all-fours on the floor, then lower her chest to the floor, keeping her hips high. Do this for 10 minutes, three to four times a day.

3. Handstands in a Heated Pool or Hot Tub

Have the mother relax in the tub for 15 minutes, then do a handstand in the deepest part of the tub, with someone supporting her legs, for as long as she feels comfortable. Repeat the handstands 3-5 times. Do this as many times a day as is practical.

All of these exercises should be done when the baby is active, and the mother is relaxed (after a warm bath or massage). They should also be done on an empty stomach. A bag of ice (or frozen peas!) placed just under the mother's ribs may also be used to help persuade the baby to move!

Chiropractic

A chiropractic technique called the Webster Technique is reputed to be very successful (80-90%) in turning breech babies. Ask your chiropractor about this technique. You and he or she may get information about it on the internet at www.4icpa.org.

Homeopathics

Try taking homeopathic pulsatilla 30X, 1 tablet 4 times a day. If you have never used homeopathics, ask your caregiver for instructions on how to take them.

Moxibustion

Moxibustion is a Chinese medicine tradition that involves burning herbs near to but not touching the skin. It has been used very successfully to turn breech babies. Ask your caregiver if you want to try it.

Drinking Lots of Water

Your baby is floating in a pool of water (amniotic fluid). The more water there is, the easier it is for the baby to turn. You can increase the amount of amniotic fluid you have by drinking lots of water.

Visualization

Imagine or "see" your baby turning as you try the above methods. Put your hands on your belly and talk to your baby. Ask him or her to turn. Get dad to have a (stern) word with baby too!