

Massage for Labour

Remember:

RELAX!!

Communicate – get feedback

Massage muscle, not bone

You may want to use oil on your hands to avoid friction. Use any light vegetable oil such as grapeseed (available from supermarkets)

Get the woman to massage her partner so he knows what she likes

PRACTISE from now on!

Soothing back massage

Cat pawing

Stroke alternate hands down back, either side of the spine, from the shoulders down to the sacrum. Remove lower hand after replacing top hand so one is always in contact with the body. Make steady, flowing movements. Vary the speed and pressure as requested. It is easier to do this if sitting low down behind the woman so you can comfortably reach right down to the sacrum.

Ladder

Just use thumbs. Walk your thumbs down either side of the spine – not on it. Replace the top thumb before removing the bottom one. Ensure that your fingers are not dragging on the back – only touch with your thumbs. Vary the speed and pressure as requested.

Big strokes, flicking away pain

Use both hands together on either side of the spine. Start at the shoulders, stroke down the back to sacrum/coccyx. Turn your hands so that your fingers are pointing outwards, and go across the buttocks, down the outsides of the thighs and off at the knees. Keep the movements fluid and rhythmic. Check speed and pressure.

Relief for lower back

Sacrum and bum

Make a figure of 8 on its side crossing over on the sacrum just above the coccyx. Make the sweeps wide, going right out around the buttocks. Get feedback and vary speed/pressure accordingly. Use sweeping, flowing, rhythmic movements.

Holding

Counterpressure. Hold you hand on the sacrum, fingers pointing upwards, with the heel of your hand on the coccyx. She'll guide you as necessary. Press as hard as she wants you to, with steady pressure. Warmth from your hands feels good, too.

Dimples

Find the sacro-iliac joint by following hips round to the sacrum. Make little circles in the dimples in this joint. She should tell you if you've got it!

The classic shoulder rub

Either just stroke the tension from the tops of the shoulders, down the top part of her back, curving across her shoulder-blades and off, or really work the shoulders, circling with thumbs, breaking down knotty, tense bits. You can work the upper back, either side of the spine – little circles up to the hair line, round the shoulder blades, etc. Mix in some more sweeping strokes so she doesn't get raw! Be led by what she wants, but most importantly, FEEL what's under the surface.

Soothing strokes

Get her snuggling back comfortably against you, and stroke her forehead, hand over hand, up over the front of her head.

You can also stroke her tummy gently during contractions to soothe pain, and sometimes just laying your warm hands right under her bump eases pain there.

In labour, massage communicates to the labouring woman that someone cares about her and wants to help and be with her.