

# Optimal Fetal Positioning

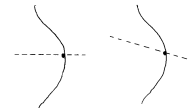
“**Optimal Fetal Positioning**” is the term used to describe the best possible position for your baby to be in, prior to birth. The optimal position is when your baby lies head down, facing your back, with your baby’s back on either side of your belly button. This is known as “**occiput anterior**”.

Having your baby lie in the occiput anterior position makes for an easier birth. In that position, your baby is best lined up to pass through your pelvis. Your baby’s head is flexed with his chin tucked into his chest, which means the smallest part of his head is presenting first, and he can more easily manoeuvre his way through your pelvis.

There are things you can do to improve the chances of having your baby lie in an occiput anterior position. The back of your baby’s head and his back are his heaviest body parts. By keeping your body posture in an upright or slightly forward position, you can, with the assistance of gravity, help keep those heaviest parts of your baby pointing down, facing your back, with his back on either side of your belly button... in the optimal fetal position.

Below are some ideas to keep in mind during the last few months of your pregnancy, to help your baby engage in the optimal fetal position:

- Mentally draw a line starting from your back, through your body and out through your belly button. Try to consistently sit and stand in a position where that line would be either completely level, or pointing downwards.



- Positions to **avoid** are:
  - Sitting in chairs that have you leaning back (ie: recliner chairs, bucket car seats, etc.). Placing a foam wedge on your seat can help keep your posture straight in bucket car seats.
  - Crossing your legs- This reduces the space in the front of your pelvis where you want your baby to be, while opening the space at the back of your pelvis.
  - Lying on your back to sleep
- Positions to **encourage** are:
  - Sitting on a birth ball
  - Sitting on a kitchen chair backwards, straddling the back
  - Sitting in any position that keeps your knees lower than your hips
  - Kneeling on the ground
  - Walking
  - Swimming with your belly down (ie: front crawl, breast stroke)
  - Sitting in yoga positions (ie: tailor position)
  - Being down on all fours
  - Lying on your side to sleep (or even better, on a ¾ angle leaning towards the bed)