

STRETCHING IN PREGNANCY

The bones in your pelvis provide a cradle for your baby during pregnancy. The baby must then pass through this funnel shaped cradle to be born. This process (birth) is made easier by pregnancy hormones, which soften the ligaments (tissues which stabilize a joint and prevent unwanted movement), particularly those over the pelvic joints.

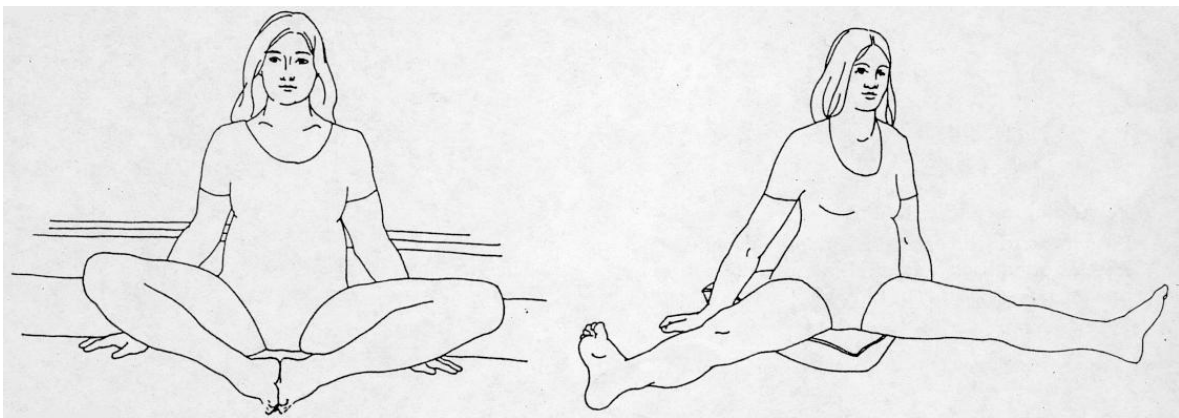
The softened ligaments allow greater movement at the joints in the pelvis and therefore increase the size of the “funnel” through which the baby is born.

Stretching exercises are designed to encourage a greater stretch of the muscles acting over the pelvic joints.

Stretching will also

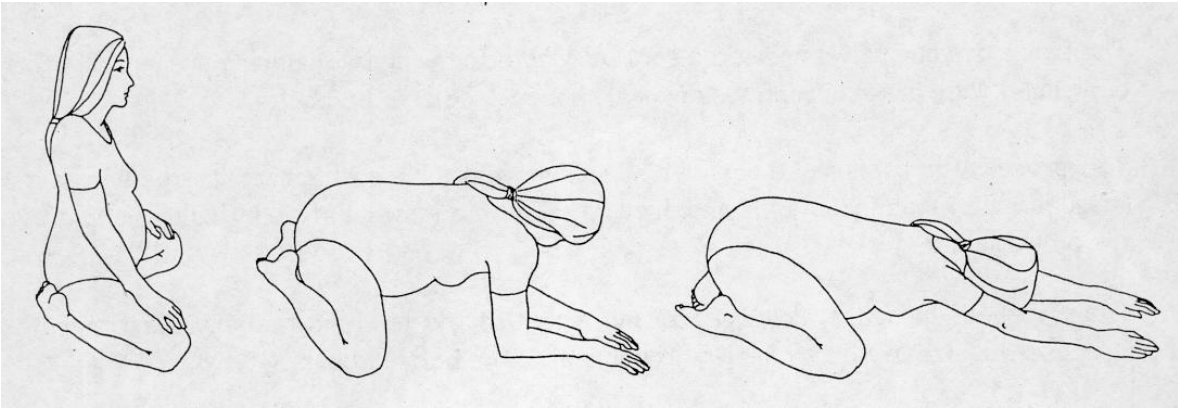
- ❑ help you become accustomed to the feelings of openness of the pelvis which are part of labour
 - ❑ give you an awareness of how your body works, where it feels tight, where is feels quite mobile
 - ❑ provides you with an opportunity to practice using the long slow out breath (used in labour) to stretch a little further.
 - ❑ Help relieve some of the side effects of pregnancy
-
- Find out how long you can comfortably hold each stretch
 - Practice by holding for that length of time
 - Every few days increase the length of time you spend on each stretch
 - Always do some form of warm up
 - Do each exercise daily
 - Aim to eventually hold each position for 5-10 minutes

REMEMBER - if stretch hurts gently release it, check and correct position, then try again.

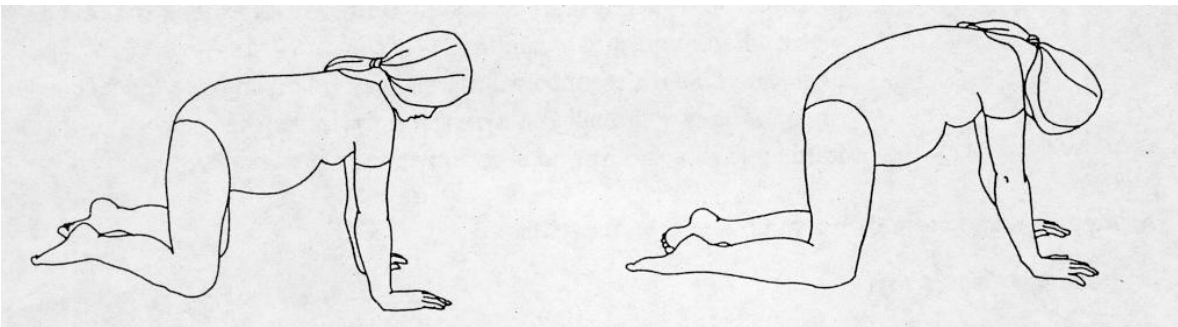


Tailor Sitting - soles of feet together, back straight against a wall

Sitting with Legs Apart - sit on the floor with bottom on a cushion, legs apart

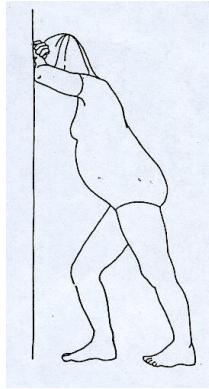
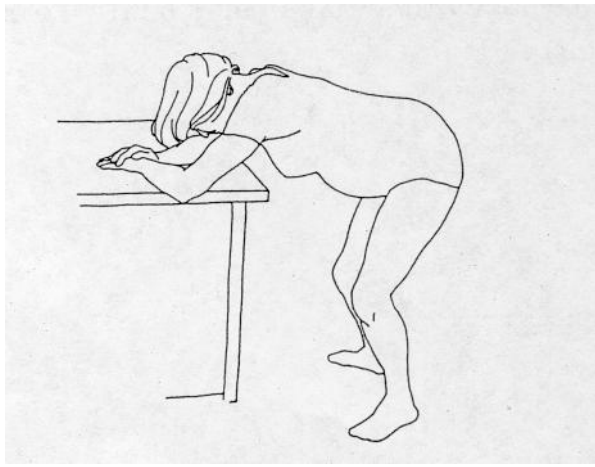


Japanese Sitting – Sit on your feet, with toes pointed and touching. Graduate to sitting with your bottom on the floor, between your feet. Use a pillow behind your knees if necessary. Bend forward from the hips, stretching arms forward. Keep back straight and slide forward until you can place elbows on the floor. To extend this exercise, stretch arms until your head reaches the floor.

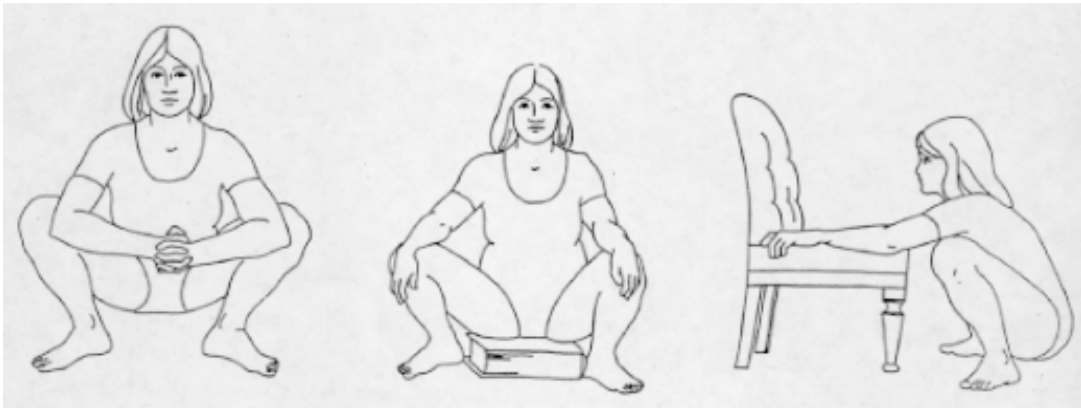


Pelvic Rocking – Start on ‘all fours’ and curl back up like an “angry cat”. To stretch the sides of the pelvis “wag” your bottom, by turning your head to look at each hip. Make circles with your bottom (pelvic rocking is excellent for relieving lower back pain and helping to get the baby into a good position for labour).

You can also use pelvic rocking while standing by leaning forward on a table and bending your knees. This is a great position to help you cope in early labour.



Calf Stretches – Against a wall, with feet pointing ahead., Bend front knee, taking weight on back leg. Repeat on other side. A useful exercised if you suffer from **CRAMPS** in your legs.



Squatting – Begin by squatting with heels raised and progress to having feet flat. Press knees apart with elbows to give extra support. It may be useful to practice a supported squat whilst working up to an unsupported one.