

## Touch Relaxation

Tension in labor is not good for you and your baby. Learn how to relax to your partner's touch, so that this will be a spontaneous reaction in labor. Your partner applies firm pressure to the part that is tense. You release to the warmth of their touch flowing toward them; they draw tension out of you. The following are suggestions for specific parts of your body. Experiment with these along with any other part of your body that you know holds tension.

### The Head

A tension headache can be relieved by your partner placing two fingers on either side of your head, against the temples, pressing firmly then releasing the pressure very gradually. You feel the tension flowing from the center to the sides of your head and away.

### The Eyes

If you are tense around the eyes, raise your eyebrows until your scalp feels tight. Your partner makes a cap with their hands and rests them firmly on your head, drawing your tension into their hands.

### The Shoulders

Many women curl up into a fetal position during labor. Your partner can help you relax by pressing the palms of their hands against the back of your shoulders.

Tension in the shoulders can result in hyperventilation. Learn to release this tension toward your partner as they sit facing you, pressing the heels of their hands against your shoulders.

### The Arms

Tighten up the arm nearest your partner. They put pressure on your shoulder with both hands. Release towards their touch. Then they stroke very slowly down to your wrist with one hand on the inside, one on the outside of your arm, molding their hands to its shape to release any additional tension in your arm.

### The Abdomen

To relieve abdominal tension during labor your partner lightly massages the lower curve of your tummy with their fingers. With one hand following the other, they massage as if stroking the baby's head.

## The Buttocks

Some women tense up their buttocks in labor when the baby presses against the rectum as it rounds the curve of the birth canal. Contracting these muscles can delay the descent of the baby's head, so practice relaxing them while your partner massages your buttocks firmly, as if kneading dough.

## The Legs

If your legs feel cold and shaky toward the end of the first stage of labor, your partner can help by stroking them from your thighs to your knees. They point their fingers downward and mold their hands to the shape of your legs with a firm stroke down and a light stroke up in a continuous movement.