



Turning a Breech Baby

Self-help methods

Not all of these methods are supported by quantifiable data, but there is a great deal of anecdotal evidence, mainly from midwives, that they can help to turn a breech. Although these methods are low risk, pregnant women are advised to discuss any self-help methods they are considering with a midwife.

Swimming

Swimming may help to turn a breech baby. This is probably due to a combination of relaxed abdominal muscles and deep water immersion, which increases the amniotic fluid, helpful to the baby's turning.

Headstand in the shallow end of a pool

Get into the pool and spend at least 15 minutes just paddling around, helping to relax your abdominal muscles. Then try a couple of headstands, with a helper to support you.

Knee-chest exercise

Get on your elbows and knees, so your hips are higher than your head, and stay in this position for 15-20 minutes a couple of times a day. You can also try crawling around in this position. A study in 1977 by Dr. Juliet DeSa Souza, retired professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Grant Medical College, Bombay, found this method successful for 89% of 744 women studied.

Postural inversion or *breech tilt*

Lie with the hips propped up 12-18 inches higher than the head, two to three times per day, for between 10-20 minutes at a time. This helps to disengage the baby from the pelvis, and when the baby's head comes up against the inside of the fundus, it is inclined to tuck its head in and do a somersault into the vertex position. It is sometimes recommended to try this with an empty stomach. Small studies have reported success rates of between 89% - 96%.

Stimulate your baby's senses

You can try to attract your baby to turn using light, sound and cold. Try shining a torch close to the vagina, so the baby heads towards the light, or to place a radio or headphones near the pubic bone. You can also try placing a bag of frozen peas on the back side of the baby's head, as babies tend to move away from the cold.

Visualization

Visualize your baby in the head-down (vertex) position. You could imagine a helium balloon attached to your baby's foot, or imagine the baby turning somersaults.

Getting specialist help

Hypnotherapy

A researcher at the University of Vermont, Burlington, USA, used hypnosis with one hundred pregnant women whose babies were in the breech position between the 37th and 40th week of gestation. The women received hypnosis with suggestions for general relaxation and release of fear and anxiety. While under hypnosis, the women were also asked why their baby was in the breech position. 81% of the babies in the hypnosis



group moved to the vertex position, compared with 48% of the control group. Hypnosis was most effective for the women motivated to use the technique. Aside from the visualization involved, the deep relaxation of hypnosis can help your abdomen to relax enough to allow the baby to turn if it wants to. (Lewis E. Mehl, MD, PhD (1994) Archives of Family Medicine, Vol. 3, Oct. 1994)

Acupressure/Acupuncture

A professional acupuncturist or shiatsu therapist will apply pressure or needles to acupoint BL 67, which is on the outside of the little toe, right next to the nail. Although you can do this yourself, there is a small risk that it could bring on labour, and the technique is likely to be more effective if done by a professional.

Moxibustion

Traditional Chinese medicine uses moxibustion (burning herbs, usually in a cigar shape) to stimulate acupoint BL 67, to help breech babies turn. Its effect may be through increasing fetal activity. Studies have reported success rates of between 75% and 80%. It is possible to buy moxa sticks and try this yourself, but, as with acupressure, it is likely to be more effective if done by a professional.

Yoga exercises

The classical yoga shoulder stand posture can help to give the baby room to turn and stimulation to allow the baby to turn itself. However, it is an advanced posture, and will need to be done in a modified position if the woman is not accomplished in the posture already. To obtain maximum effectiveness, the posture should be done when the baby is most active. Other yoga exercises can also help - approach an experienced yoga practitioner who is experienced in antenatal exercise for advice and support.

The Webster Technique

This must be carried out by a chiropractor. It is a simple technique, which involves the chiropractor working gently on the woman's legs and vertebra, usually requiring a series of appointments every two or three days for two weeks. Clinical case studies show an 80-100% success rate with this technique and a widespread trial is planned.

Homeopathy

Homeopathic Pulsatilla causes the muscle fibers in the uterus to even out and may help to turn a breech baby. Homeopathic Natrum Muriaticum can help reduce swelling (edema) if this is a contributing factor. Consult an experienced homeopath for advice.

External Cephalic Version (ECV)

ECV involves the external manipulation of the baby by an obstetrician, done sometime after the 35th week of pregnancy. Ultrasound is usually used to initially find out exactly how the baby is lying and to locate the placenta, then to monitor the baby throughout. The biggest risk associated with ECV is separation of the placenta which rarely occurs due to the guidance of the ultrasound. A side effect that some women experience is the discomfort caused by the pressure used to turn the baby, although many describe only as a very intense massage.

Once head down ... keeping the baby in the vertex position

- Being aware of your posture, and sitting upright, can help to keep your baby in the vertex position.
- Upright exercise, such as walking, can also help.



- So can simple yoga exercises, such as sitting in the classic *tailor* position and leaning forward.
- Occasionally a belly binder will be used to “tie” the baby in place.

After all that, if your baby is still breech...

If your baby remains breech, there may be a good reason why. It may be because of the position of the placenta or a short, knotted or twisted cord. These things are not necessarily anything to worry about, and breech may simply be the best presentation for your baby.