



# Ripe & Ready

## Part 1: Second Trimester & Beyond

*With so many social expectations around the “due-date”, it is hard to be a pregnant woman and not feel like there is a clock that starts ringing ferociously on that magic day. We know that our due-dates are the best guess for a birthday that can take place several weeks before or after. There seems to be a fine line between letting nature take its course, and being proactive so that our bodies are as prepared for the birth as possible. Numerous strategies can support your body’s innate ability to give birth naturally and possibly decrease your chances of going far past your due date. We have tried to outline the strategies we have found to be the most effective in nurturing and ripening your mind and body for labour. Awaiting baby after your due date has passed may be stressful, especially if you are considering electing a medical induction at some point, which carries a degree of risk as well as benefit, and may not look like the birth you had envisioned for yourself.*

*For the most part, when you will start labour is determined by a complex interplay of maternal and fetal hormones that starts in early pregnancy. Another factor is the fetal position in late pregnancy which in turn can be influenced by various other factors including maternal energy, pelvic alignment, and lifestyle habits. Of course, there is also much to be said for the mind/body connection – we know that women rarely start labour if they are sick, and the same can be true if they have overwhelming fear or anxiety.*

### **Self care**

Eat, sleep, have sex, get some exercise, learn how to nap!

### **Nutrition**

Drinking enough water and eating healthy, nutritious food will supply your body with the building blocks for the hormones necessary to ripen your cervix and start labour. This will also help prevent perineal tearing.

### **Herbs**

#### **Growing Belly Tea**

Drinking a nutritive herbal tea that supports the reproductive system and prepares the uterus for birth has been a tradition practiced by many traditional cultures across the world. Local herb/health food stores supply tea blends which are considered safe in pregnancy and contain supportive herbs such as red raspberry leaf, nettles, oatstraw, and lemon balm, or you can have a herbalist formulate your own personal mixture. A nice excuse to regularly take time for yourself and enjoy a cup of tea!

### **Prenatal classes**

Knowledge of what to expect, practice in pain coping techniques, exploration of fears and anxieties, as well as connection with other couples – all will help you to surrender into labour, and discover ways to support the healthy hormones of birth. If it’s not your first birth, there are refresher classes you can take. Sign up early to have your choice of class times, but you likely won’t attend until after 30 weeks.

### **Doula**

Even before labour starts, a doula is an invaluable added support and a resource as your pregnancy progresses and due date approaches. She can assist you to establish a proactive and positive outlook on the journey ahead of you. Interview doulas early so that you have a wide range of choices available to you.



### **Acupuncture**

Aligns energy, optimizing maternal and fetal hormones. Research shows acupuncture to be effective in changing malpositioned babies. Also good for dealing with numerous pregnancy discomforts and promoting better sleep.

### **Chiropractic**

One factor in malposition may be a pelvis that is out of alignment. Chiropractic can be used for prevention as well as treatment. Because of relaxin, pregnant women are especially responsive to chiropractic adjustments. A well-aligned spine and pelvis also promotes nervous system health and excellent hormonal flow, not to mention relief of back, hip and pelvic aches.

### **Massage, Cranio-sacral therapy**

Massage increases overall body awareness and relaxation, giving you a heightened sensory experience of your body, coping techniques, and an awareness of how to let go in labour. By treating all the muscles and soft tissue of the pelvis, back & legs, these areas are relaxed, open and more flexible.

### **Essential Oils, Epsom Salts**

4-6 drops Lavender oil in the bath, at least once per week! Add the lavender to ½ cup milk or cream for a luxurious soak, or to 5mL almond oil prior to adding to your bathwater. Add 1-2 cups Epsom salts to increase the relaxation factor, minimize swelling and reduce blood pressure.

### **Relaxation, Meditation, Visualization**

Practicing relaxation will serve you well for the labour process, however you find a way to do it. Some women also like to practice visualizations of a head down, well-positioned baby.