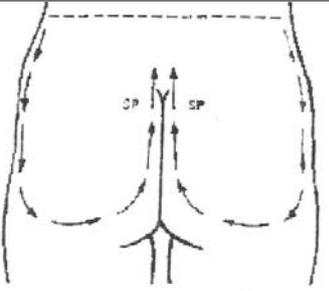
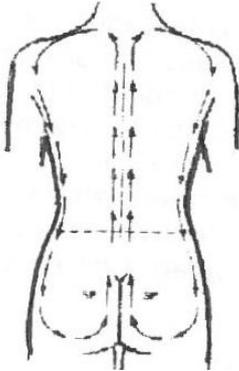
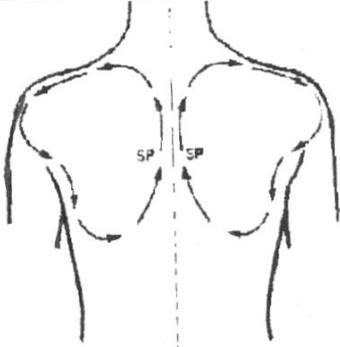
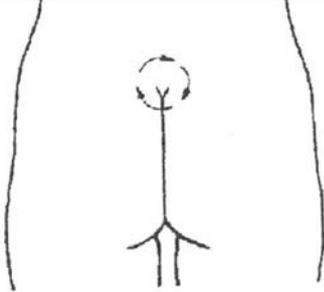


Massage for labour

<p>The woman being massaged may be kneeling over bean bags, sitting or standing. Her birth partner needs to be comfortable too.</p>	
<p>During a contraction, and in time with the woman's breathing, the birth partner moves his/her hands up the buttocks to waist level (during the in breath). During the out breath, the birth partner pulls the hands outwards.</p>	
<p>As the out breath continues, the birth partner draws the hands downwards. This should be repeated with smooth movements. This massage is useful in most labours and is good for lower backache.</p>	
<p>This can be extended into a whole back massage, keeping hands either side of the spine. Do this slowly and gently after a contraction to aid relaxation. You do not need to follow the breathing.</p>	

<p>Upper back and shoulder massage: use this to help breathing and relaxation. It is a useful exercise if a TENS machine is being used (when a lower back massage is not possible).</p>	 <p>A line drawing of a person's upper back and shoulders. A vertical dashed line represents the spine. Two arrows labeled 'SP' point towards the spine from the shoulder blades. Curved arrows on the shoulders indicate a circular massage motion.</p>
<p>Sacral pressure: massage with the palm or fist firmly in a clockwise direction (if right handed) or anti-clockwise if left handed. The other hand should be on the hip or shoulder.</p>	 <p>A line drawing of a person's lower back and pelvis. A circular arrow around the sacrum indicates a clockwise massage direction. A vertical line with a cross at the top and bottom represents the spine.</p>
<p>Leg massage: this is useful to aid breathing and relaxation if a back massage is not possible – e.g. if a TENS machine is being used or a monitor belt has been attached.</p>	 <p>A line drawing showing a person lying on a table. A second person is sitting on a stool, massaging the person's legs. Arrows on the legs indicate the direction of the massage.</p>

Other points

- During a massage, always keep at least one hand on the person being massaged.
- A shoulder and neck massage can also be beneficial.
- An alternative option for a back massage – move the hands downwards from the shoulders and out at the hips, moving the thumbs down either side of the spine.
- Some women like massage during contractions; others prefer it in-between.

Further reading

- Linda Kimber's article *Effective Techniques for Massage in Labour* in the Practising Midwife (April 1998, Vol 1, No.4) on which the above methods are based.
- See also Linda Kimber's video *Childbirth Massage Techniques* (1998) available from NCT Maternity Sales.

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