



International Childbirth Education Association

Using a Knitted Uterus – ICEA Teaching Idea Sheet #2

What Are Desirable Qualities in a Knitted Uterus?

A knitted uterus is a multi-purpose teaching aid which can include the uterus with fundus indicated and detachable vagina. The concepts of visualization in childbirth education should be kept in mind when choosing a knitted uterus. Features such as stripes and jarring color contrasts may distract students. Colors and texture of the yarn should enhance the perception of the uterus as being a warm, soft environment.

How Can I Use A Knitted Uterus?

The knitted uterus provides a visual experience of what has been hidden inside pregnant women. Besides being used for demonstrating such concepts as effacement, dilation and crowning, the knitted uterus can be passed around for class members to see up close and to handle.

Show Effacement and Dilation

Effacement can be shown quite realistically by weaving elastic threads through the cervical yarn at both the internal OS and the external OS so that the cervix is held closed. This illustrates the cervix in a non-effaced state. As you slowly

push the doll's head down toward the cervix, the elastic at the internal OS will open, showing effacement but no dilation. Continuing pressure against the external OS will illustrate gradual dilation of the cervix.

Illustrate the Difference between Dilation and Crowning

This is a common area of confusion for students in childbirth classes. Be sure to emphasize the difference between dilation of the cervix during the first stage of labor (which is invisible externally) and the visible dilation of the vaginal opening at the end of the second stage. When the cervix is fully dilated around the doll's head, attach the knitted vagina to show the progress still needed before birth occurs.

Demonstrate These Conditions:

- Conditions of the cervix: station, a "lip" or "rim" of the cervix, edematous cervix
- Potential effects of maternal positioning
- What happens during an internal exam
- What happens when membranes are stripped

- Fundal massage during recovery
- Effects of fetal hiccups and other movements
- Difference between a firm uterus and a boggy one
- Manual extraction of placenta
- Involution
- External examination to determine fetal position

Do I Need a Special Doll to Use the Knitted Uterus?

A life-sized doll or fetal model that is floppy or bendable is most workable. The doll's head should be approximately 10 cm diameter; the length of the doll between 18-20 inches.

The contents of the uterus can also be a ball used with padding to "flesh out" the uterus. If a ball is used, it should be similar in size to a baby's head. Since the ball will represent the baby's head and this will be a teaching aid with strong visual impact, be sure to treat the ball as if it were the baby's head. Keep in mind what the class' reaction might be if the ball should pop out of the uterus unexpectedly. A model of a placenta with umbilical cord and attached membranes is available for purchase. If this is not available, a doll can be placed inside a clear plastic bag. This

will serve two purposes. The bag can represent the amniotic sac. When protruding through the cervix, it can be “ruptured” to demonstrate amniotomy.

Also the plastic bag will allow the doll to slide through the cervix more easily for insertion prior to and expulsion during the demonstration.

Whenever a doll or fetal model is used for teaching or demonstration, it is important to treat the doll as if it were a real baby. In that way a message of gentleness, warmth and caring is transmitted along the factual content of the lesson.