



International Childbirth Education Association

Using a Pelvic Model – ICEA Teaching Idea Sheet #1

The pelvis should be handled in a way that demonstrates an attitude of acceptance, normalcy and respect. Class participants may identify with the pelvis as if it were part of their own bodies.

The Pelvic Model Can Be Used:

1. *Female Anatomical Structure and Function*

Important parts of the pelvis, such as the inlet, outlet, ischial spines, coccyx, etc., can be shown. The effects of the hormone relaxin on the joints, as well as the increased size of the pelvic outlet, can be illustrated by loosening the screws on the plastic model. Station, descent, the cardinal movements, the process of birth, fetal positions and presentation can be demonstrated by using the model with a fetal doll or your fist.

2. *Positions for Pushing*

Use the flexible clothes dryer elbow to show the advantages and disadvantages of various pushing positions. A clothes dryer elbow is the part which leads from the dryer to the outside vent. It is shaped in a right angle and can be inexpensively purchased at most hardware stores. Insert the elbow directly into the pelvis to demonstrate the “down-up-and-out” dynamics

of pushing. This gives a graphic, visual explanation of the value of pushing in an upright position.

NOTE: Elbow joints are available in two forms: metal and plastic. The softer, quieter plastic material is recommended because it provides a less harsh image of expulsion, a body process which might be frightening to some women. In addition, the instructor must be sensitive to the image of a “gaping hole” which may result from use of a clothes dryer elbow. The vagina is not a gaping hole, but rather an expandable wall that is molded and stretched by the baby’s head. Discussion of the elasticity of the vagina is important if the clothes dryer elbow is used.

3. *Posterior Position and Back Labor*

Point out the coccyx and sacrum. Demonstrate physiological reasons for back massage, counter pressure and effleurage.

4. *Good Postures and Body Mechanics*

Good posture and body mechanics can be shown by placing the pelvis in various positions. Teach about pelvic rocking by tilting the pelvis forward and backward.

5. *Causes of Common Discomforts of Pregnancy*

Swelling, sciatic pain, decreased circulation in the extremities, pelvic distention and hemorrhoids can be illustrated by using pieces of ribbon, rope or yarn to portray the abdominal aorta (one red piece), the sciatic nerves (two green pieces) and the pelvic veins (two blue movies). Place them in the pelvis as they appear anatomically. To assure continued correct positioning, the ribbons or yarn may be taped on the inside of the pelvis. Inflate a medium sized balloon until it is shaped and sized like a uterus. Using uterus, place it neck down into the pelvis to show the effect of the weight of the gravid uterus on the arteries, veins and nerves. This provides a graphic demonstration of the effects of the supine position on the laboring woman.

NOTE: Be sure to under-inflate the balloon. A balloon bursting during the demonstration could vividly illustrate some pregnant women’s greatest fears. Choose a neutral colored balloon, e.g. light brown, pink, white, or yellow. Excessively bright or vivid colors tend to be harder to visualize as part of the body or may create negative images. For example, red could be associated with bleeding; purple with trauma and lack of oxygen; green with disease.

6. *Relationship of Fetus,
Uterus and Pelvis
During Childbirth*

Place a fetal doll in a knitted uterus and then place them in the pelvic model. You can use this to demonstrate what happens to the baby, the uterus and the pelvis during labor and birth.

7. *Location and Function
of the Pelvic Floor
Muscles*

Stretch two wide rubber bands around the screws of the plastic pelvic model, with one on the right side and one on the left side. This will illustrate the “sling effect” of the perineal floor. This can be used as the basis for a discussion of the importance of the pelvic floor. When teaching the Kegel exercise, press the rubber bands down and up to demonstrate the strength, function and muscle tone of the perineal floor. The contrast between good and slack pelvic musculature can be demonstrated by using smaller, tighter rubber bands and then larger ones.

Common Errors to Avoid:

- Holding pelvis straight up and down. It actually tips quite far forward in the normal pregnant woman.
- Dropping the pelvis. In addition to breaking it, this could undo the positive visualization you set out to achieve.