A new type of birth ball that has potential to enhance the labor and delivery experience for women is the peanut ball (PB) especially for those using an epidural. Peanut shell shaped, the PB can be used in a variety of positions during stage one and two of labor and pushing. The PB offers natural positioning in ways that open the pelvis to facilitate progression of labor.

The PB has taken hold in hospital use in the United States and the United Kingdom where health care providers are readily incorporating the PB into their practice, based on what they can see is successful with women (Grant & Clutter, 2014). Anecdotally, users of this tool have found it to be comfortable and effective in anatomical adjustment to speed the progress of labor. Further, both those birthing with or without epidural analgesia demonstrate shortened time of first and second stage labor compared with non-PB users. The PB research and literature evidence is small but significant.

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Tussey and colleagues (2015) found significantly reduced time for women with epidural use in labor (N=107 with PB; N=91 without PB). The first stage was shortened by 29 minutes and second by 11 minutes. The odds of requiring a cesarean surgery were also significantly reduced (OR=0.41, p=.04) in those using the peanut ball.

In an unpublished retrospective study in one Midwestern United States hospital (Grant, Craig, & Rice, 2014), 44 women without epidural use were compared with and without PB use (N= 28 with PB; N=16 without PB). Peanut Ball users had a first stage average of 217.9 minutes compared with the non-PB user time of 326.4 minutes, demonstrating a
There are over seven possible positions for women using the PB whilst laboring on a bed, with the tuck position being used the most commonly. The photo shows the PB in use, the tuck position is a variation of this where the PB end is tucked in closer to the chest to create more of a squatting position for the woman.

A reduction of 108.5 minutes for PB users during the first stage of labor. A second stage average of 12.6 minutes for PB users compared with 41.8 minutes for non-PB users demonstrated a reduction of 29.2 minutes for PB users during the second stage of labor. Qualitative findings from women included increased comfort and satisfaction with the quicker labor progression.

Website for peanut ball references and resources: premierbirthtools.com. Also check out the Hot Topics page of ACM’s website midwives.org.au for links to YouTube videos showing PBs in use.

Author details

Cheri B. Grant RN, ICCE, CLC, ICD, CLD, PBT, CD, BDT(DONA) is the RN Coordinator of St John Owasso Hospital Lifestart program, a Doula trainer, published author and Peanut Ball Trainer of Premier Birth Tools.

Lynn B. Clutter, PhD, APRN, CNS, CNE, IBCLC, is the Associate Professor at the University of Tulsa, Tulsa, Oklahoma and a Lactation Consultant at the Saint Francis Hospital, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

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SUBMISSION GUIDELINES WWW.MIDWIVES.ORG.AU | EMAIL MIDNEWS@MIDWIVES.ORG.AU