

A multicentre, randomised controlled trial of position during the late stages of labour in nulliparous women with an epidural: clinical effectiveness and an economic evaluation (BUMPES)

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Plain English summary

The BUMPES RCT

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Plain English summary

The BUMPES study aimed to find out whether or not women having their first babies who have an epidural and give birth in an upright position (kneeling, sitting in a chair or upright in bed), rather than lying down (on their side), are more likely to have a vaginal birth and less likely to need forceps or ventouse.

Between October 2010 and January 2014, 3236 women took part in the study at 41 maternity units in England and Wales. Just over one-third (35.2%) of the women allocated to the 'upright' group had a spontaneous vaginal birth, compared with 41.1% in the 'lying-down' group. Outcomes for the health of the woman and baby (such as whether or not the baby needed special care or the woman had problems with incontinence) were no different between the two groups, either in the short term (just after the birth) or up to 1 year later.

The study offers clear evidence that women having their first baby and who have epidural pain relief in labour are more likely to have a straightforward vaginal birth if they adopt a lying-down position in the late stages of labour when their baby is ready to be born. There are no apparent disadvantages of lying down for either the woman or her baby in the short or long term.

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