

# Acupuncture in Pregnancy & Childbirth

**Pregnancy is an amazing time in a woman's life. Many women report feeling healthier than they have ever felt before; however, the physical growth of the baby and changes in hormone levels can bring about pain, discomfort and a variety of health problems.**

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can provide a safe, effective alternative for many of the health complications that may arise before, during and after pregnancy. A growing number of women are choosing acupuncture to use throughout their pregnancy and as an optional treatment for an overdue or difficult labor.



## **Planning for a Healthy Baby**

Healthy parents produce healthy babies. With acupuncture and Oriental medicine, parents can improve their health to create the most optimal environment for their unborn child. In addition to their ability to strengthen, support, and balance overall health and well-being, acupuncture and Oriental medicine are an effective treatment for regulating menstruation and hormone levels, reducing stress and addressing any pre-existing medical conditions or concerns that a woman may have.

## **Acupuncture during Pregnancy**

Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can play a vital role in the comfort of a pregnant woman. There is strong evidence to support that acupuncture is highly effective at treating some of the most common problems experienced during pregnancy including morning sickness, heartburn, insomnia, water retention and sciatica.

**Here is a list of some of the problems that an acupuncturist often treats during pregnancy:**

- \* Nausea and Vomiting
- \* Heartburn
- \* Constipation
- \* Hemorrhoids
- \* Edema and Swelling
- \* Urinary Tract Infection
- \* Pelvic Pain
- \* Neck and Back Pain
- \* Sciatica
- \* Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

- \* Leg Cramps
- \* Fatigue and Exhaustion
- \* Insomnia
- \* Anxiety and Depression

### **Acupuncture for Childbirth**

While there are acupuncture points that can provide natural pain relief during labor, acupuncture is more commonly used to induce labor. There are several points that stimulate contractions and influence cervical ripening. There is also an acupuncture point that has been found to turn a breech baby.

### **Acupuncture Postpartum**

Many women feel depleted after the birth experience. Acupuncture and Oriental medicine can help the transition of those first few months after birth to ensure a quick recovery. Postpartum care focuses on the physical, emotional and psychological recovery of the mother from the effects of pregnancy and labor, as well as encouraging breast feeding.

#### **Here are some of the postpartum disorders that can be treated with acupuncture:**

- \* Fatigue
- \* Postpartum Depression
- \* Mastitis
- \* Insufficient or Excessive Lactation
- \* Post Operative Healing
- \* Night Sweats

#### **An acupuncture point on the small toe of the foot (Urinary Bladder 67) has been found to effectively revolve fetuses in breech presentation.**

In an Italian study, 240 women at 33-35 weeks of gestation carrying a fetus in breech presentation were randomized to receive acupuncture plus moxibustion (an herb used to apply heat to an acupuncture point) or to be assigned to the observation group. At delivery, the proportion of babies that had turned from breech position to vertex (head-down) position was 53.6 % in the group treated with acupuncture while the proportion of babies that had turned from breech position to vertex position in the observation group was 36.7%. (Source: *J Matern Fetal Neonatal Med.* 2004 Apr;15(4):247-52 )

#### **Common Acupuncture Points used During Pregnancy:**

##### **Zhubin (K 9) – 'beautiful baby point'**

**Location:** Above the medial malleolus (inner ankle bone), right below the calf muscle.

**Function:** Calms the mind, builds or tonifies blood.

**Indication:** Good for hypertension, fear, anxiety, nightmares, and mental disorders.

**Zusanli (St 36)**

**Location:** Four fingers below the knee cap, on the outer edge of the tibia.

**Function:** Strengthens overall constitution, builds blood and Qi, resolves edema, and harmonizes meridians that control digestive functions.

**Indication:** Great point for diarrhea, constipation, gastric pain and indigestion. Also helps with insomnia, edema (water retention), and increases energy level.

**Neiguan (P6) – 'morning sickness and motion sickness point'**

**Location:** Two fingers above the inner wrist.

**Function:** Calms the mind, harmonizes the stomach.

**Indication:** This is THE point for nausea and vomiting. It is also one of the most relaxing acupuncture points and is used for both insomnia and anxiety.