

Acupuncture, Pregnancy & Childbirth

Acupuncture - including Acupressure and Moxabustion, which is stimulation of acupuncture points with the heat of Moxa, a burning herb - helps us find harmony and balance, optimising health in mind and body.

Pre-conception acupuncture can enhance fertility for both men and women, for example, increasing sperm motility and stabilising irregular ovulation. Once pregnancy is established, Acupuncture can help with a variety of the less welcome side-effects of the joyful event! Certain 'cautionary' points are traditionally avoided during certain stages of the pregnancy, which can be used later to stimulate onset of labour. If, however, there is a history of early miscarriage, acupuncture may assist in securing and stabilising the pregnancy, and can optimise IVF treatment, *but it will not retain an unviable foetus*. Once pregnancy progresses, acupuncture has been proven to reduce the symptoms of nausea caused by the increased levels of hormones. It helps reduce other symptoms, such as painful congestion in engorged blood vessels – whether varicosities in the legs, pelvic floor, or haemorrhoids; swelling which can cause temporary carpal tunnel syndrome; muscular or bony aches and pains; sinusitis; itching; insomnia, stress and fatigue. The discomfort of heartburn due to the compression of the stomach by the growing baby can be alleviated, and if the baby remains in a breech or posterior presentation, from the 35th week, Moxabustion is statistically successful at turning the baby, and if the obstetrician eventually performs a manual inversion, it has been shown that prior Moxabustion treatment results in a higher rate of success. The mother and birth partner can be taught some basic acupressure to help reduce pain and aid in effective contractions during labour; or should the baby be overdue, then acupuncture can offer a 'more natural' alternative to a medical drug-based induction. With 'Pre-birth' acupuncture treatment (4 sessions weekly from week 36), there is good evidence of a more efficient initial stage of labour, reducing the need for an oxytocin infusion, (the chemical which speeds up labour and contractions) and generally leading to a less painful, less stressful labour which is perceived as being shorter. After the birth, acupuncture can assist in letting down the milk; counter-acting stress incontinence or mastitis; aiding wound healing; reducing the effects of any post-partum depression (baby-blues) – particularly if the mother has already attended for alleviation of emotional stresses during her pregnancy; and generally helping her adjust to her new role or new baby.

Of course, many women sail through an enjoyable pregnancy, but these lucky ladies, and their unborn babies, can also benefit from treatment with a qualified acupuncturist. The mother's partner also becomes much more involved in the experience due to their helpful acupressure during the stages of labour.

ElectroLotus offers obstetric acupuncture consultations and if you have any questions about your suitability for treatment, please ring me.