

Acupuncture During Pregnancy

Acupuncture is an ideal form of treatment as it offers women **drug-free relief** for a multitude of problems that can arise during pregnancy and childbirth. Its use for conditions often regarded as part of a normal pregnancy can not only improve a woman's quality of life but also prevent them from becoming serious enough to necessitate medical treatment.

Some common problems that may be effectively treated with acupuncture are morning sickness, threatened miscarriage, heartburn, constipation, varicose veins, hemorrhoids, urinary tract infections, musculoskeletal pain, sciatica, symphysis pubis pain, fatigue/exhaustion, anemia, insomnia, anxiety/depression, vaginal discharge, vaginal itching, sinusitis, pregnancy-induced hypertension, edema, and breech/posterior positions.

Pre-birth Acupuncture Treatments

Acupuncture can also be used as a series of pre-birth treatments in the final weeks of pregnancy to prepare women for childbirth. Research has demonstrated that the duration of labor was **significantly reduced** in women who received pre-birth acupuncture. In clinical practice, acupuncture is an ideal method to help women prepare themselves to have the most efficient labor possible.

Using a standard set of acupuncture points, treatment is given once a week starting with week 37 until delivery. Women who receive pre-birth acupuncture treatments consistently experience **natural efficient labor**. Studies have shown that the time spent in active labor is **notably shorter** than in those who do not receive treatment. Additionally, because pre-birth acupuncture prepares the woman's body to work efficiently during labor, this contributes to **reduced intervention rates** including medical inductions and caesarean section.

Acupuncture Inductions

In obstetrics, a medical induction refers to initiating labor artificially using synthetic hormones like pitocin. The disadvantage of artificially induced labor is that women often find the contractions too intense, painful and difficult to cope with and often require epidural anesthesia to deal with the pain of labor. This in turn increases the risk of further interventions such as the use of forceps or a caesarean delivery. Unlike these medical procedures, acupuncture stimulates the woman's body to release **her own natural hormones**, which promotes the most efficient natural experience possible.

Acupuncture inductions are most commonly used for women who have become post-term and are seeking to avoid an imposed medical intervention. Women should be discouraged from seeking "social inductions" before their due date because they have decided it would be convenient to have the baby sooner rather than later. Just because acupuncture is viewed by some as more natural than a medical induction, it does not follow that the resulting labor will be natural. Inducing labor prior to a woman's due date may result in serious problems necessitating medical intervention.

As a general rule-of-thumb, the induction process usually takes between 1 to 4 treatments spaced over the course of a few days. This should be taken into account when coordinating health care with the mother's primary care giver.

Please call Kimberly Ruel, Acupuncture Physician at (904) 859-5333 if you have questions regarding acupuncture during pregnancy or to make an appointment.