



## the acupuncture IVF support clinic

### Pregnancy and Labour

An ancient Chinese obstetric text tells us, “A pregnant woman carries within her the finest piece of jade. She should enjoy all things, look at fine art and be attended by handsome servants”.

In the absence of servants, handsome or otherwise, at least try to take some time for yourself, enjoy a wide variety of delicious fresh foods, including adequate protein, and exercise regularly, but gently, in a pleasant environment. Continue taking a pregnancy specific vitamin supplement. Don't eat raw foods such as fish, egg, meat or soft cheese, and keep caffeine intake low. Avoid fumes and toxic chemicals and stop smoking and drinking if you haven't already: ask us if you need help with this.

If becoming pregnant has been a long journey involving many medical interventions then these next few months are a time to relax and let nature do her job.

Should any minor pregnancy disorders develop, acupuncture can be a useful remedy.

**Sinusitis** that develops during pregnancy is usually quickly and effectively managed with acupuncture.

**Headaches** are suffered by some women in the early part of pregnancy, and will in most cases respond quickly to treatment.

**Constipation** is a common occurrence in early pregnancy but fibre, adequate fluid intake, exercise and acupuncture can all help to resolve it.

**Heartburn** can occur any time in the pregnancy but especially during the third trimester. Acupuncture and a careful diet will lessen this symptom until such time it resolves when the baby moves lower in the pelvis.

**Fatigue or Anaemia:** many women notice that acupuncture helps them cope with the fatigue of early pregnancy. Later on, if fatigue persists then acupuncture and moxa combined with dietary measures or iron supplements will improve energy levels.

**Persistent nausea or vomiting** can be mild or quite debilitating. Acupuncture twice a week will in most cases help to manage these symptoms.

**Excess weight gain:** overweight women can give birth to overweight babies who are likely to suffer from diabetes and weight problems as they grow up. Diet, exercise and acupuncture will improve metabolism and help weight loss.

**Varicose veins** in the legs or vulva cause local pain; while acupuncture does not cure these conditions it reduces the associated discomfort.

**Haemorrhoids** are a common complaint during pregnancy and especially after labour. Acupuncture and diet can help manage these and reduce discomfort.

**Depression:** Clinical trials show that acupuncture is an effective alternative to antidepressant medication in pregnant women.

**Stress and anxiety:** stress during pregnancy can have an impact on the baby's immune system. Acupuncture reduces levels of stress hormones and promotes a sense of relaxation and wellbeing.

**Pain:** sciatica, carpal tunnel syndrome, leg cramps, rib or pubic bone pain can all cause discomfort that can range from mild to crippling. While most of these symptoms will resolve after delivery, they can usually be managed in the meantime with acupuncture which may be preferable to pain killing medication.

**Skin rashes and itching** can occur in the final trimester causing distress and lack of sleep. Acupuncture is an effective alternative to steroids and antihistamines.

## Preparing for labour

Clinical studies have shown that women who have acupuncture once a week in the month leading up to their due date have shorter labours, fewer medical inductions and fewer emergency caesareans.

## Correcting breech and posterior baby positions

This treatment, using acupuncture and moxa, is ideally commenced at week 34 and has a 75 – 80% success rate.

## Start of labour

For those women who have premature rupture of membranes or who are scheduled for a medical induction, acupuncture can be used to soften and relax muscles and tendons and encourage the start of labour.

## Labour support

Partners or support persons can learn how to use acupuncture points for pain relief during labour.