Acupressure points, massage and movements for labour

An handout for pregnant women and partners who attended our birth preparation workshop or a one-to-one birth preparation session with a qualified practitioner

© Jacqueline Mangold & Kay Millar, 2008
About this handout

This little aide-mémoire has been conceived for pregnant women and their partners who attended our birth preparation workshops or a one-to-one birth preparation session with a qualified practitioner. It is meant to remind women and partners about the techniques we covered and give them quick access to point information and helpful movements for situations that might occur before, during and after labour.

It is therefore understood that the acupressure techniques presented in these pages have previously been taught, cautions for their use given, and the location of points verified for accuracy. The authors decline all responsibility for the use of this handout without any previous tuition of the material. Please remember that some points should not be used or used with caution before the pregnancy is at term.

For clarifications or comments about this handout, please contact us directly by phone or email. You'll find our contact details on page 8 of this handout.

Many thanks and all our best wishes for the upcoming labour and birth(s).

Jacqueline Mangold & Kay Millar, November 2008

Please note: this handout is not for commercial use or teaching purposes.

Table of contents

Point  Information and location  3 – 4
  Large Intestine 4
  Spleen 6
  Liver 3
  Bladder 31,32,33,34
  Gallbladder 21
  Bladder 60 and 67
  Kidney 1
  Pericardium 8

Points and movements that could help during labour  5 - 7

Situations:
  Pre-labour, overdue, imminent chemical induction  5
  Waters break - no contractions, contractions stop/start in early labour  5
  Posterior baby (OP), difficulty to engage well  5
  Tired, anxious, restless, irritable – things moving too slowly  5
  Painful labour  6
  Anterior cervical lip  6
  Labour progressing too fast – urge to push too early  6
  Labour progressing too slowly – fully dilated, no pushing contractions  7
  Retained placenta  7
  After pains  7

About the authors  8

List of resources and acknowledgements  8
Large intestine 4  
“Great Eliminator”

Qualities: calming, grounding, releasing, descending.

Good for bringing on labour and stimulating efficient contractions. Can help baby’s progression through the birth canal during 2nd stage.

Location: between the first and second metacarpal bones, slightly nearer the second metacarpal (index finger).

Acupressure stimulation: apply pressure with the thumb in the direction of the forearm. This points feels achy when properly stimulated.

Do not use before week 37 is completed or labour has started.

Spleen 6  
“Three Yin Crossing” or “Life support”

Qualities: harmonising, regulating, nourishing, calming.

Good for regulating the uterus and bringing on labour. Supports cervical ripening. Can help with foetal positioning and after pains.

Location: 4 of the women’s fingers above the ankle bone on the inner leg, just off the shin bone.

Acupressure stimulation: apply perpendicular pressure with thumb or index finger. The point often feels achy (a bit like a mild bruise).

Do not use before week 37 is completed or labour has started.

Liver 3  
“Happy calm” or “Great surge”

Qualities: calming, harmonising, regulating, moving.

Good for spasms, contractions, muscular pain, frustration, depression. Promotes smooth flow of energy and helps release blocked energy.

Location: between the top of the 1st and 2nd metatarsal.

Acupressure stimulation: apply perpendicular pressure with thumb or index finger.

Use with caution during pregnancy.

Bladder 31,32,33,34  
“Upper, Second, Middle and lower sacral bone”

Qualities: regulate and invigorate the pelvic area and lower abdomen.

Good for promoting labour and bringing energy to the lower abdomen.

Location: these 4 points are located in little holes on the sacrum, either side of the body’s midline. The most commonly used point, Bladder 32 (second blue dot), is located inside the “dimples” formed by the ilio-sacral joint (red dots).

Acupressure stimulation: use thumb and knuckle to apply perpendicular pressure. Keep arm extended. Fists can be used to cover all the points.

Do not use before week 37 is completed or labour has started.
Bladder 67
“Extremity of Yin”

Qualities: dynamic, strongly releasing and rectifying.

Good for difficulties with foetal positioning in labour (breech, posterior, etc.), retention of placenta.

Location: at the base of the outside of the nail of the little toe.

Acupressure stimulation: use tip of finger or nail to stimulate the point.

Use with caution during pregnancy.

Kidney 1
“Bubbling Spring” or “Earth Surge”

Qualities: calming, grounding, restorative. Helps descend energy and heat from upper body downwards.

Good for anxiety, restlessness surges of anger or hysteria, back pain, tiredness. In labour: very grounding, reassuring at transition or whenever we are “loosing the plot”.

Location: at the bottom of the top third of the sole of the foot. You’ll see a dip appear when you flex your foot towards your ankle.

Acupressure stimulation: apply pressure with thumb or fist.

Pericardium 8
“Palace of weariness”

Qualities: restorative, invigorating, strengthening, calming.

Good for weariness, lack of spirit, heat related disturbances, nosebleeds, anger.

Location: in the centre of the palm, between the 2nd and 3rd metacarpal. Bend middle finger into palm to find the point.

Acupressure stimulation: just hold the point firmly with thumb or finger without too much pressure to achieve a calming effect.

Gallbladder 21
“Shoulder well”

Qualities: relaxing, releasing.

Good for muscular tension, exhaustion, spasms, headaches. Promotes labour and lactation. Can help with descending of retained placenta.

Location: halfway between the prominent vertebra at the base of the neck (C7) and the top of the shoulder joint (acromial process). Highest and most tender point of the shoulder.

Stimulation: downward with thumbs, elbow tips, forearms. Downwards and outwards with elbows (neck to shoulder).

Do not use before week 37 is completed or labour has started.

Bladder 60
“Kunlun Mountain”

Qualities: helps descending, removes obstruction, eases pain, relaxes sinews.

Good for: difficult labour, lower backache, helping better engagement in pelvis.

Location: halfway between tip of outer ankle and Achilles tendon.

Acupressure stimulation: apply firm pressure with the thumb or hold inner ankle with thumb while applying pressure with knuckle.

Use with caution during pregnancy.

© Jacqueline Mangold & Kay Millar
Points and movements that could help before and during labour

**Situation: pre-labour, overdue, imminent chemical induction, waters break but no onset of labour, contractions stop and start**

**Suggested points:** Large intestine 4, Spleen 6, Sacral points, Liver 3

**Possible movements:**
- dancing (stroking lower back, sacrum, hips), sitting on ball, possibly moving hips (good access for stimulation of most points, esp Gallbladder 21) or simply lying on side (Kidney 1, foot or back massage, gently holding Pericardium 8, Liver 3)

---

**Situation: baby posterior (OP), difficulty to engage well**

**Suggested points:** Bladder 67 and 60, Spleen 6

**Possible positions for stimulation of points:** sitting on ball or chair for massage of hand and feet points, all fours or sitting propped against chair for sacral points

---

**Situation: tired, unable to rest, irritable, things moving too slowly.**

**Think about:** resting, relaxing, letting things happen, becoming and staying centred, following your instincts

**Possible points as needed:** Kidney 1, Pericardium 8, Gallbladder 21 (see indications on previous pages)

**Possible movements:**
- dancing (stroking lower back, sacrum, hips), sitting on ball, possibly moving hips (good access for stimulation of most points, esp Gallbladder 21) or simply lying on side (Kidney 1, foot or back massage, gently holding Pericardium 8, Liver 3)
Situation: painful labour.

*Points for general pain relief:*

- L. intestine 4
- Bladder 60
- Bladder 32
- Gallbladder 21

*Points for back pain:*

- Bladder 60
- Bladder 32
- Bladder 67
- Bladder 60

Possible movements and positions for treatment of points: standing (good for all Bladder points) sitting or kneeling forwards, all fours (good access for all points). Knee-chest for posterior baby (see previous page).

Situations: anterior cervical lip, labour progressing too fast or slowly

*Points for anterior cervical lip:*

- Spleen 6
- Bladder 32
- Kidney 1
- Pericardium 8

Possible points for labour progressing too fast:

- Kidney 1
- Pericardium 8

*Points when fully dilated - no pushing contractions, slow labour progress:*

- L. intestine 4
- Spleen 6
- Liver 3
- Bladder 32

Possible movements, if no pushing contractions, slow progress: leaning forwards (good for treatment of all points) squatting, standing supported squat (good for bearing down)

Possible movements for anterior lip and labour progressing too fast – urge to push too early: knee-chest, all fours

Possible movement when baby stuck: asymmetrical kneeling
Situation: retained placenta

Suggested Points: Bladder 60 and Gallbladder 21

Following movements can be helpful in descending the placenta: sitting on bucket or on birthing stool (Gallbladder 21 and Bladder 60 can easily be stimulated in a sitting position).

Sitting on bucket or birthing stool

... and after labour

Situation: after pains (point can be stimulated before and during feeds)

Suggested point: Spleen 6
About the authors

Jacqueline Mangold, Adv. Lic Ac MBAcC MRSS

Jacqueline practices Traditional Acupuncture and Shiatsu in Oxford. She has a special interest in the use of acupuncture and shiatsu to enhance fertility, help with problems during pregnancy and keep labour as natural as possible. Over the last 10 years, she has attended post-graduate training with teachers such as Zita West, Debra Betts, Sarah Budd, Suzanne Yates a.o. on the special subject of treatment during pregnancy and labour. She is a practitioner member of the Acupuncture for Childbirth Team (ACT) Oxfordshire, the British Acupuncture Council (BacC) and the Shiatsu Society (UK). Besides her work as a therapist, Jacqueline teaches general classes of Iyengar Yoga.

Contact details:  
www.jacquelinemangold.co.uk  
jacqueline@activebirth-oxford.co.uk  
07957 416641

Kay Millar, BSc(SocSci)Hons PGCE BWY Dip. MICHT

Kay has two children and is a qualified Teacher, Yoga teacher, Active Birth Teacher and Infant Massage Instructor. She has been working with parents and young children for many years, first in primary education, then Early Years, Health Education and in the voluntary sector. Kay qualified with Janet Balaskas in the early 80’s as one of the first Active Birth Teachers and has since worked with Sheila Kitzinger on her book ‘New Pregnancy and Childbirth’ and tutored on the Active Birth and British Wheel of Yoga Teacher Training Courses. Kay currently co-runs the national Yogabirth Teacher Training Course, organises the Oxford Yoga Workshops for Teachers and teaches Yoga with Birth Preparation, Post Natal yoga and Infant Massage in Oxford.

Contact details:  
www.yogabirth.co.uk  
www.activebirth-oxford.co.uk  
kay@activebirth-oxford.co.uk  
01865 554743

Useful resources

Some books and documents you might find useful for further reading and reference:

**Beautiful Birth, Practical techniques that can help you achieve a happier and more natural labour and delivery**, by Suzanne Yates

**Natural pain relief techniques for childbirth using Acupressure** by Debra Betts for more info on point location. Document in PDF format can be downloaded from http://home.clear.net.nz/pages/debra_betts/Acupressure.pdf  
Debra Betts' point location videos on youtube can be found by typing in the relevant point number, e.g. BL 32 or LI4.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the teachers that have been directly or indirectly instrumental in the development of these handouts, especially Suzanne Yates. Clare-Louise Hatton's **Point Compendium of the College of Traditional Acupuncture (CTA)** and Debra Betts' **The essential Guide to Acupuncture in Pregnancy and Childbirth** have been used as references for the part on points, on pages 3 and 4.