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## When to refer a pregnant woman for acupuncture:

Some possible reasons include:

- 1) Pain in Pregnancy
- 2) Nausea and Vomiting
- 3) Moxibustion for turning breech
- 4) Birth Preparation
- 5) Inducing labour
- 6) Acupuncture during Labour
- 7) Post partum treatments

This document contains details and summaries of relevant research on some of these topics. If you have any questions or require any further information, please contact **Dawn Aarons at 647-209-8259.**

- 1) **Pain relief** – acupuncture is used for all types of pain relief, from headaches to foot pain. There are no negative side effects and it is safe when performed by a qualified practitioner.

I have successfully treated women with back pain, sciatica, pelvic pain, carpal tunnel, tennis elbow, thigh pain, headaches, etc.

*Edin et al. (2005) published a single blind controlled trial involving 386 pregnant women in the British Medical Journal.*

*Acupuncture was superior to stabilizing exercises in the management of pelvic girdle pain in pregnancy, with acupuncture the treatment of choice for patients with one-sided sacroiliac pain one-sided sacroiliac pain combined with symphysis pubis pain and bilateral sacroiliac pain.*

## 2) Nausea and Vomiting

Most women referred to me are already beyond their first trimester when they come to see me (hoping it will pass after the first 12 weeks, not realizing that they do not need to suffer so much).

I have had dramatic cases of women who find almost immediate and lasting relief, to women with severe hyperemesis that do not get lasting relief but really appreciate a short reprieve. Sometimes just taking the edge off the nausea and offering lifestyle support is enough to allow women to feel comfortable enough to begin enjoying their pregnancies.

*Smith et al. (2002) published two articles from their research on nausea and vomiting in pregnancy. The first looked at the effectiveness of acupuncture and the second at the safety of acupuncture treatment in early pregnancy.*

*The traditional acupuncture group reported less nausea throughout the study and less dry retching from the second week. They also reported improvement in five aspects of general health status (vitality, social function, physical function, mental health and emotional role function).*

*In assessing the safety of acupuncture in early pregnancy, data was collected on perinatal outcome, congenital abnormalities, pregnancy complications and problems of the newborn. No differences were found between study groups; the study concluded that acupuncture is a safe and effective treatment for women who experience nausea and dry retching in pregnancy.*

### 3) Acupuncture and Moxibustion for turning Breech

NOTE: most effective if initiated at 34 weeks.

I see women for a single treatment in which I teach them how to do moxibustion at home (important to be performed daily for 5 days or more); and give them a preparatory treatment (including points to stimulate increased amniotic fluid – anecdotally effective for increasing the chances of the fetus turning).

*Cardini et al. (1998) had a randomized controlled trial published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in which it was found that at 35 weeks gestation 75.4% in the intervention group (receiving twice daily moxibustion for 7 days) had changed to cephalic (47.7% in the control).*

### 4) Birth Preparation

*Kubista and Kucera (1974) researched the use of acupuncture to prepare women for labour. Their research concluded that acupuncture performed once a week from 37 weeks gestation was successful in reducing the mean labour time of the women treated.*

*They calculated the labour time in two ways. The first was the mean time between a cervical dilation of 3-4 cm and delivery. In the acupuncture group this was four hours and 57 minutes compared to five hours and 54 minutes in the control group. The second was the mean subjective time of labour taken from the onset of regular (10-15 minute) contractions until delivery. The acupuncture group had a labour time of six hours and 36 minutes compared to eight hours and two minutes in the controls.*

*Zeisler et al. (1998) concluded that acupuncture treatment had a positive effect on the duration of labour by shortening the first stage of labour, defined as the time between 3cm cervical dilation and complete dilation. The acupuncture group had a median duration of 196 minutes compared to the control group time of 321 minutes.*

*Rabl (2001) published a randomized controlled trial into the effects of acupuncture on cervical ripening. The treatment group were treated with twice daily acupuncture beginning on their due dates. The time from the woman's due date to delivery was an average of five days in the acupuncture group compared to 7.9 days in the control group, and labour was medically induced in 20% of women in the acupuncture group compared to 35% in the control group.*

I have had continual success with labour preparation treatments. The approach is to treat the whole person – assisting her in feeling balanced, healthy and energetic – well prepared for labour. Acupuncture is also used to

ripen the cervix and encourage engagement in the pelvis. These weekly appointments, usually beginning at 37 weeks, also help the women to prepare on a mental and emotional level – confronting and releasing blockages and feeling prepared.

- 5) **Acupuncture Induction**- acupuncture is a gentle and safe way to encourage a woman to go into labour. The treatment depends on the state of the woman. Some women are exhausted while other women are blocked. As Chinese Medicine does not separate mind and body, this treatment helps to move energy wherever needed to allow her body to initiate labour.
- 6) **Acupuncture support in labour** – in addition to effective pain relief, acupuncture can be used for stalled labour, to energize the labouring woman, and to stop excessive bleeding postpartum.

I cannot guarantee my availability, but I do welcome calls (any time of day or night) if a woman would like me to attend her birth. I will make every effort to be able to come (home or hospital).

- 7) **Post-partum treatments**- Women enjoy acupuncture postpartum to help them heal from birth, to support their energy, ability to sleep, and breastfeeding. I have found it particularly helpful to treat women Day 4-5. All postpartum visits are done as house calls.



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