

# Complementary therapies for pregnancy and childbirth

## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Diet – the natural way to absorb vitamins and minerals</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>‘Alternative’ Supplements</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Tissue salts and pregnancy</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Homeopathy in pregnancy</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Herbs in pregnancy</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Aromatherapy in pregnancy</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Also, Acupuncture, chiropractor / Osteopath, Massage,     Bach flower remedies</b>	
<b>Remedies and therapies for common complaints in pregnancy</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Infertility</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Morning sickness and nausea</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Back ache and ligament pain, including Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction Disorder</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Threatened miscarriage or premature labour</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Anaemia</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Cramp</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Restless Legs</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Constipation</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Breach and transverse baby</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Inducing a late baby</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Heartburn / acid reflux</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Varicose veins</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Oedema</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Pre-eclampsia</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>High blood pressure</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Sciatica</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Carpul tunnel</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Insomnia</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Thrush</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Stretch marks</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Bladder and kidney problems</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Tension and anxiety</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Preparation for childbirth</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Childbirth</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Bibliography and useful addresses</b>	<b>26</b>

# **Complementary therapies for pregnancy and childbirth**

## **Introduction**

Choosing complimentary therapies for pregnancy and childbirth can be confusing, especially if you have never used them before. Think of them as extra support that can safely cure and alleviate many ailments of pregnancy and childbirth as well as empower and enhance the health and well being of you and your baby. By choosing to use complementary therapies you are not rejecting the expertise of your midwife or obstetrician, simply building up your own health on the foundation of their care.

**Pregnancy is not an illness** - For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century pregnancy was regarded as an illness. The reason was that with the advent of industrialisation came the overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in which many women lived. Often they did not have good health to start with and a rapid succession of pregnancies, hard physical labour both at work and at home, lots of children to look after and poor nutrition, meant that women weakened rapidly, which sadly led to many deaths of mother and child in childbirth. Improvements in sanitation and nutrition as well as huge technological and medical advances mean that today we rarely hear of tragedies in childbirth. However, the down side of these advances has been the over-medicalisation of pregnancy. This often leaves many women feeling disempowered, so over the last decade there has been a recognisable shift in the medical profession towards women taking a pro-active role in the choices they make for their pregnancy and labour. Obstetricians now concentrate on the pregnancies with complications and the midwives look after all the healthy 'normal' cases. Women are encouraged to eat a well balanced diet, take supplements, if necessary, and exercise regularly. Many midwives actively encourage women to use complementary therapies and some are even trained in the use of a complementary therapy, for example, massage, homeopathy, acupuncture and shiatsu. Delivery rooms are now geared more towards active birth. The days of inactive, passive pregnancies and trying to give birth on your back with your legs in stirrups are hopefully well and truly over.

## **Exercise**

There is little excuse not to take regular exercise while pregnant. Myriad classes in pregnancy yoga, active birth, ante-natal aqua-aerobics and Pilates now exist. Some women find personal trainers to take them through. Others make sure they walk everywhere while office bound women use their lunch break as an opportunity to keep fit. Exercise videos for pregnancy cater for women who find it hard to get to a class. The thing to remember is the fitter you are in pregnancy, the healthier and happier you will be, the easier your birth and the faster your recovery – most importantly, the healthier your baby will be.

**Diet, changes and supplements** – Pregnant women need to consume an extra 300 calories a day. Diet is very important in pregnancy for both the mother and the baby. A mother's diet will affect the child's health for the rest of his/her life. Drinking plenty of fluid is also important as the risk of dehydration is increased.

## **Supplements**

Apart from the standard advice about taking folic acid to prevent neural defects in the foetus, metabolic changes that take place in pregnancy mean that you make better use

of the food you eat, therefore it is not always necessary to take vitamin and mineral supplements. Women who should think about taking supplements should take those specifically designed for pregnant women. They are recommended for women who are overweight or underweight, teenagers (because they are still growing themselves) and those who have a restricted diet, for example a macrobiotic diet. Other women who would benefit from supplements are those who have lost a baby through miscarriage and still birth or have had three babies within two years. If you smoke, live in a very polluted environment or have a very poor diet your body's demand on vitamins will be greater and you should also take a good quality multi-vitamin and mineral supplement designed for pregnancy.

### **Fluid**

Drinking plenty of fluids is also important. Water is the best drink, preferably still mineral water or filtered tap water – 6-8 glasses/day. If you love your tea and coffee try to cut it down to the minimum you can tolerate. They are both stimulants and diuretic, they contain tannin and caffeine that bind with important nutrients such as iron, calcium and zinc. Don't drink either after a meal. De-caffeinated tea and coffee are not a good idea as the process of decaffeination uses a lot of chemicals. If you can't bear the idea of drinking water, then don't fall for the commercially sold fruit juices, they seem to lead to swelling limbs. It is best to choose fresh juice from the chill cabinet or better still make your own. Mix juice and water 50/50. If you drink squash to make your water bearable, choose an organic fruit squash or elderflower cordial. These have no artificial ingredients. Steer away from low sugar alternatives. Artificial sugars and additives have been linked with a variety of health problems and behavioural problems in children. Many women suffer from heartburn in pregnancy which is generally aggravated by acid, so avoid fruit juices, citrus fruit and vinegar.

### **Diet – The natural way to absorb vitamins and minerals**

Cravings for large quantities of food, strange combinations and non-foods such as coal are indications of nutritional deficiencies and/or blood sugar fluctuations. Seek advice from a nutritional expert.

### **Vitamins and minerals**

Ideally most vitamins and minerals should come from food not supplements.

#### **Vitamin E**

Ensures iron absorption and to prevent the destruction of red blood cells. Vitamin E is also good for boosting the baby's immune response to allergens and may reduce the risk of Asthma.

#### **Good sources**

Eat plenty of vitamin E-containing foods such as leafy vegetables, fruit, nuts and seeds, oily fish and soy beans,

#### **Vitamin C**

Helps your body absorb iron. Keeps you strong and enhances your immune system.

#### **Good sources**

Fresh fruit and vegetables, potatoes and berries

## **Iron**

Iron deficiency causes anaemia (See common ailments in pregnancy).

Iron is necessary for the formation of red blood cells. If there is not enough haemoglobin, insufficient oxygen is carried to the baby and you get tired. If anaemic when giving birth it is highly likely you will haemorrhage.

### **Good sources of iron:**

Black strap molasses, egg yolk, whole grains, dried peas and beans, all dark green leafy vegetables, raisins, prunes, brewers yeast and nuts. Eating lots of these iron rich foods in pregnancy will help you avoid taking supplements as you will have a lot of iron stored on your liver. The foetus draws on these reserves and stores enough iron in its liver to last for several months after birth.

### **Digestion and how it effects iron absorption**

If you suffer from anxiety or tension this may impair digestion and absorption. Take vitamin b complex or brewers yeast to help nervous system and to prevent anaemia caused by deficiency of vitamin B, B12 and Folic acid.

For proper digestion and absorption there needs to be sufficient hydrochloric acid in the stomach. Sip a little cider vinegar and honey (two teaspoons of cider vinegar and one of honey) in hot water half an hour before meals, or lemon in hot water, to increase acidity.

### **Foodstuffs that lock up iron**

Drinking lots of tea, especially after a meal, can lock up iron, making it unavailable for your body to use. Taking ant acids medicines stops your body absorbing and iron efficiently.

## **Folic acid**

One of the B complex vitamins and is vital for the formation of red blood cells. It is particularly important in pregnancy for the development of the foetus and the supply of breast milk.

### **Good sources of Folic acid**

Found in green leafy vegetables, also brewers yeast, beans, legumes, nuts and liver.

### **Destruction of Folic acid**

Folic acid diminishes in storage and exposure to sunlight, which is another reason why leafy vegetables should be eaten as fresh as possible. Folic acid is destroyed by cooking, especially boiling, so ensure that you eat a fresh green salad daily and only light steam or stir fry vegetables. Some drug such as aspirin, estrogens and sulphur drugs destroy folic acid in the body and alcohol slows down its absorption. High doses of vitamin C hasten its excretion.

## **Calcium**

Necessary for the formation of strong bones and teeth. It enables blood to clot and muscles to work smoothly, and may protect against high blood pressure and pre – eclampsia. Your baby’s teeth start to bud very early in pregnancy so it is vital that your calcium intake in the first four months of pregnancy is not too low.

**Good sources of calcium**

Milk and dairy foods, green leafy vegetables, seaweed, whole grains, nuts and carrot juice.

**Foodstuffs that can lock up calcium.**

Oxalic acid in spinach, rhubarb, beetroot and cocoa as well as coffee.

**Magnesium:**

If levels of magnesium get low it can cause muscle cramp. Good levels of magnesium may also help prevent pre-eclampsia.

**Good sources of magnesium**

Cereals, nuts, Soya, milk, fish and meat

**Zinc**

Necessary for muscles to contract well, shortage of zinc is a cause of long labour. Deficiency may result in miscarriage, growth restriction in the uterus, stillbirth and congenital handicap.

**Good sources of zinc**

High fibre foods such as bran. Brazil nuts, parmesan and other hard cheeses, seeds, herring and meat.

**Foodstuff that can lock up zinc**

Iron supplements can interfere with the absorption of zinc.

**‘Alternative’ Supplements. These can be taken during and after pregnancy.**

**Spa tone-** If your midwife advises you to take iron supplements then this is a good alternative, much more easily absorbed than standard pills and doesn’t cause constipation. Find it in your local chemist. It comes in a box of sachets containing spa water from Snowdonia. It has a very high content of iron sulphate. One or two sachets/ day should fulfil your daily requirement. Take in water or fruit juice. Remember vitamin C helps your body absorb iron and don’t drink tea for at least 30 minutes because it will prevent your body absorbing it by locking it up.

**Floradix** – Multi – vitamin and mineral herbal / food supplement. A good liquid tonic, one with added iron. Find it in most health food stores.

**Spirulina** – Food supplement made from plant algae. Rich source of protein, EFA’s and betacarotene\*. Available in powder or tablet form. Find in most health food stores.

**Probiotics such as bio-acidophilus-** Healthy bacteria for the health of your intestines. If antibiotics have been taken more than twice in a lifetime then it is worthwhile taking a probiotic supplement to rebalance the healthy bacteria in you intestines and reduce the chances of you or your child having a Candida imbalance (thrush).

\* **Beta-carotene** is the vegetable source of vitamin A. It is water soluble and non-toxic. Vitamin A as Retinol has been found to be unsafe for the developing foetus and no supplement should contain anymore than 10,000 IU's as a daily dose.

**Bio-care** produce top quality supplements for pre-conception and anti-natal care for both men and women. Available through mail order, they also have an excellent telephone helpline where you can ask well trained staff for advice. Find contact details on bibliography and addresses page.

### **Tissue salts and pregnancy**

Tissue salts are known as a half way house between straight nutritional supplements and homeopathy. They are a range of twelve of the most common mineral tissue salts found in the human body and critical for health maintenance. They replace deficient minerals in a microscopic form which are absorbed directly in the mouth. They have a slight homeopathic effect due to their preparation being so close to that of homeopathic remedies, although unlike homeopathic remedies they contain a minute amount of the original substances. Rather than treating "like with like", these remedies correct imbalances or deficiencies in the body's cell nutrition, helping the body restore itself to health. As well as the individual remedies there are also combinations of tissue salts for different complaints. Currently New Era produce a range of tissue salts in different combinations labelled A – S, which being partly homeopathic and partly micro-nutrient is totally safe for both pregnant women and children. They can also be taken with other medications. There are no instant cures using tissue salts as they gradually restoring the body to its natural balance.

#### **Tissue salts recommended for pregnancy**

**Calc. Fluor.** - for tissue elasticity and dental development and helps prevent stretch marks, makes ligaments more supple and ensures stronger teeth for mother and baby. For impaired circulation, varicose veins and piles.

**Mag. Phos.** - Anti- spasmodic, taken to prevent cramping of muscles in legs and feet, soothes an irritable womb and relieves some headaches in pregnancy, optimises magnesium levels and helps prevent colic in babies after birth.

**Ferr. Phos.** - Improves iron absorption from food and supplements. Also anti-inflammatory properties, helping prevent infections in pregnancy and counteracting sore, swollen, inflamed joints. Improves tissue strength, making aches and pains less likely in pregnancy.

**Nat. Mur.** - Improves the absorption of fluids. Can help with morning sickness and prevent loss of hair during childbirth and lactation. It also helps build up the milk

supply for breast feeding. Generally known to help with dryness or excessive moisture in any parts of the body, running colds, loss of smell and taste.

**Silica** - The cleanser and eliminator. Taken for anything with pus formation, for example, boils and styes, and is good for brittle nails and scalp disorders. Helps prevent mastitis and cracked nipples. Also useful in addressing painful and lame feet, especially the instep. Sleeping: helps prevent overheating and rapid pulse as well as talking in your sleep, bad dreams and jerking of limbs.

**Kali Phos** – The nerve nutrient. The main mineral constituent of nerve and brain tissue, so helps in the healthy development of these systems. Helps keep you calm and improves sleep and hyper – emotionality.

### **TISSUE SALT REGIME IN PREGNANCY**

1 TABLET OF EACH TO BE TAKEN MORNING AND EVENING

Month 2                      Calc. Fluor.  
   Mag Phos  
   Ferr phos

Month 3                      Calc Fluor  
   Mag Phos  
   Nat Mur

Month 4                      Calc Fluor  
   Nat Mur  
   Silica

Month 5                      Calc. Fluor  
   Ferr Phos  
   Silica

Month 6                      Calc Fluor  
   Mag Phos  
   Ferr Phos

Month 7                      Calc Fluor  
   Mag Phos  
   Nat Mur

Month 8                      Calc Fluor  
   Nat Mur  
   Silica

Month 9                      Calc. Fluor  
   Ferr phos  
   Silica

**In months 8 & 9 Kali Phos** may be needed, consult homeopath

**Combination C** for acidity, heart burn and dyspepsia

**Combination Q** for sinusitis

## **Homeopathy in pregnancy**

Homeopathy is excellent for pregnancy, childbirth and babies. Provided you find yourself a good book and follow the guidelines it is safe. Better still, find yourself a homeopath.

A highly recommended book is, '**Homeopathy for mother and baby – pregnancy birth and the post natal year**' by **Miranda Castro**. She is the homeopath's homeopath and well respected throughout the profession. The book not only explains how to use homeopathy, gives remedies for ailments but also very good down to earth advice on diet, mental and physical health in pregnancy, labour and birth, breast feeding and early motherhood.

## **What is homeopathy**

Homeopathy is a gentle yet highly effective form of complementary medicine that can offer support on many levels – physical, emotional, and mental. It works by stimulating the body's own healing power so that it can clear itself of many symptoms of illness and reach a balance. It cannot harm you or your baby because there are no toxic side effects. It is therefore an ideal treatment at a time when most conventional drugs are prohibited. It also has the added benefit of boosting the vitality and health of your baby.

## **General rules when taking homeopathy**

Homeopathy comes in different strengths. From the chemist you can buy 6c or 30c. If you buy a birth kit, they will be 200c. The larger the number, the stronger the dose. Homeopathy should be kept away from strong smells. Never touch the tablet. Tip one into the lid and then tip the lid into your mouth. If you drop a tablet, throw it away, never put a dropped or handled tablet back in the bottle.

Let the tablet dissolve under your tongue. Leave at least ten minutes between taking and tablet and eating, drinking and brushing your teeth.

Strong smells, coffee, peppermint and camphor can anti-dote homeopathy.

You will know quite quickly whether a remedy has worked. Take another pill when you feel symptoms returning.

Homeopaths talk about your 'picture' - this means the symptoms and emotions you are displaying.

A 'constitutional' remedy acts on a very deep level. It is a remedy that is given to you by a professional homeopath.

## **Pre-conception**

Homeopathy can be highly successful in treating infertility and regular homeopathic treatment prior to conception helps maintain a good level of health.

## **Pregnancy**

Self-subscribing homeopathy can treat many of the less serious symptoms of pregnancy such as morning sickness and constipation. It can also help with emotional symptoms that may arise in both parents adjust to approaching parenthood. More

serious complaints such as raised blood pressure, symphysis pubis dysfunction and a baby in breech position are best helped by a professional homeopath.

### **Birth**

Homeopathic remedies are an excellent way of managing birth. It helps mothers to relax and follow the natural birth process and give partners a role as they help to choose the remedies. Birthing packs are now available from the Homeopathic pharmacies, Helios and Ainsworth (see bibliography and address page for details). They contain 18 most commonly needed remedies for pregnancy, childbirth and recovery. They also contain a mini materia medica (see extract below) a booklet which helps you to decide which remedy is needed.

### **Pain relief in labour**

Homeopathy can provide pain relief, give energy to an exhausted mother and ensure the smooth progression of labour. It can also be used to induce labour and speed up flagging contractions once labour is underway.

The use of homeopathy before and after labour can reduce bruising for mother and baby, can heal nerve damage to the vagina and coccyx, and help heal tears and stitches.

### **Mastitis and cracked nipples**

Respond wonderfully to homeopathy. The correct remedy can bring about relief within a few hours, avoiding the use of antibiotics so early in the baby's life.

### **Colic**

If the baby has colic, constipation or sticky eyes, they can all be swiftly cured using the appropriate remedy.

### **Post natal depression**

Can be greatly helped with homeopathy. The correct remedy will help a woman rebalance after one of the biggest changes in her life, smoothing the way into her new role.

## **Herbs in pregnancy**

Herbal remedies are for the most part quite safe to be taken during pregnancy; some are useful alternatives to drugs both in chronic illness and for acute minor problems that may arise during pregnancy.

### **Caution**

It is still preferable to take no medication whatsoever in the first three months, unless there is a specific problem that needs treatment. There are herbs that should never be taken in pregnancy because in large amounts they can cause uterine contractions and thereby risk miscarriage. Always check the herbs you wish to take are safe for pregnant women.

### **Herbs which are safe to take in culinary doses but not as a medicine during pregnancy**

Celery seed, cinnamon, fennel, fenugreek, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, saffron.

Many herbs can simply be prepared at home, but do consult a qualified medical herbalist if you need reassurance. As a general rule, a 'tea' is made from a few teaspoons of the dried herb in boiling water; a decoction is made by boiling a beneficial root or bark and drinking the resulting liquid and a tincture is a pre-prepared, concentrated liquid form of the herb that is taken a few millilitres at a time. A good book to have at hand is, '**The complete Woman's Herbal – a manual of healing herbs and nutrition for personal wellbeing and family care,**' by Anne McIntyre. She is the herbalists' herbalist and well respected throughout the profession. Much of the information on herbalism on this website comes from her book.

### **Aromatherapy in pregnancy: It is advisable not to massage essential oils or place essential oils in the bath for the first three months of pregnancy.**

Always check that an essential oil is safe in pregnancy. Julia Lawless, an aromatherapist who has written several books, is always reliable and Purple Flame, a good quality essential oil supplier, will always give you good advice over the phone. See bibliography and address page for more details.

Never use oils without diluting them in a base oil (usually almond or grapeseed oil). The general rule is 12 drops of essential oils to 30ml of oil. In pregnancy it is advisable to use a smaller proportion of essential oils (about 6-8 drops/ 30ml). If putting oils in the bath or foot bath mix a maximum of 6 drops in a little base oil or milk before adding to the water.

When vaporising oils, add 6 drops of essential to hot water and place the dish over the burner.

### **Acupuncture**

Helps most problems in pregnancy and is useful as an aid to childbirth.

### **Chiropractor / Osteopath**

These therapies can sort out any back and joint problems that are due to the misalignment of bones.

### **Massage therapist**

A properly trained massage therapist that has specialised in pregnancy will help alleviate muscle aches and tensions. A good masseur will help you relax, sleep better, enhance the general well being and the immune system of you and your baby, and give advice on beneficial exercises you can do at home. They should also be able to advise you on pain relieving massage techniques that your partner can do for you in pregnancy and labour.

### **Bach flower Remedies**

Very helpful for emotional transitions. Rescue Remedy, a combination of remedies, is a key player in keeping calm at times of stress. Good for both mother and partner throughout labour and birth. Add a few drops to a glass or bottle of water and sip regularly. See bibliography page for more information.

## **Remedies and therapies for common complaints in**

**pregnancy: By caring for your self through diet, exercise and complementary therapies, you can both prevent and treat ailments, and keep yourself healthy throughout pregnancy.**

The following information is a guide only and not to be used as a materia medica. It as an illustration of what complementary therapies, diet and exercise can treat. Consult a good homeopathic book to find which remedy your picture fits and which strength or dosage should be administered; a good herbal to find out how best to prepare your herbs, and so on. This website is meant to be used as series of 'sign posts' rather than an encyclopaedia.

**Be holistic;** don't just look to a magic little pill to correct your problem. Think about how you can improve your lifestyle, diet, exercise and manage your stress levels.

*For the more serious complaints always consult a medical practitioner.*

### **Infertility due to polycystic ovaries**

**Homeopathy:** Folliculinum

**Acupuncture:** See practitioner

### **Morning sickness and nausea**

Usually stops around 12-14 weeks.

**Homeopathy:** often cured by sepia or pulsatilla

**Acupuncture:** See practitioner

**Herbalism:** Teas can be blended herbs or drunk separately. Cups can be drunk 3-6 times a day or you may prefer to take sips every few minutes when the nausea arises. Herbs can also be taken as tinctures up to about 15ml / day. Take 3-5 drops under the tongue when needed.

***For nausea accompanied by anxiety and tension:*** Lemon balm, Lavender, Wild yam, Chamomile, Raspberry leaf. Also, ginger and dill.

Dandelion root, meadowsweet, black hoarhound and Gentian are herbs that stimulate and enhance the function of the digestive tract and liver.

***Other suggestions:*** Also try crystallised ginger, ginger beer and ginger biscuits.

Slippery elm and Iceland moss sooth the whole digestive tract

### **Back ache and ligament pain, including symphysis pubis dysfunction disorder**

High levels of progesterone release relaxin and soften the muscle and ligaments supporting the back. The weight of the abdomen puts further strain on the back.

**Homeopathy:** Arnica and Bellis perennis, and /or constitutional remedy of Kal carb (see practitioner).

**Tissue salts:** Ferr. Phos

**Massage:** Will give you the greatest relief. See a massage therapist for a pain relieving massage and advice on pain relieving exercises, as well as simple massage techniques that your partner can perform at home.

**Aromatherapy:** Lavender, geranium and chamomile

**Exercise:** Yoga and Pilates both help (always inform teacher you are pregnant and tell her where you are suffering pain).

**Chiropractic/osteopath:** See practitioner

**Acupuncture:** See practitioner

**Other suggestions:** You may have a urinary infection.

### **Threatened miscarriage or premature labour -Consult your medical practitioner**

**Homeopathy:** See practitioner: Aconite, Viburnum or Sabina, depending on symptoms and taken as soon as a problem arises.

**Acupuncture:** See practitioner.

### **Anaemia**

Anaemia is quite common in pregnancy, especially in the last two months. It caused by the blood volume in pregnancy swelling faster than our red blood cells are able to multiply. When the red blood cells are diluted, there is a relative drop in haemoglobin, which is why prevention of anaemia is an important part of prenatal care. In the last couple months of pregnancy a high proportion of the mothers iron is stored in the baby's liver, to supplement the low iron milk diet.

Those with anaemia generally feel they are making 'heavy weather' of a pregnancy when there are no actual symptoms.

Anaemia can cause headaches, dizziness, constant tiredness, bad temper, irritability, depression, breathlessness or palpitations on exertion, lethargy, indigestion.

**Homeopathy:** Ferrum Metallicum and other remedies, depending on whole picture.

**Tissue salts:** Ferr. Phos

**Supplements:** Spa tone, Floradix with iron

**Diet:** It is best to build up iron stores prior to conception or in early pregnancy. The richest sources are: Organic meats, Egg yolk, Peas, beans and lentils, Molasses, Shellfish, Parsley.

The next best sources are Meat, Fish Nuts Watercress Beet and turnip tops

Other dark green leafy vegetables

Whole wheat bread, wheat germ, brown rice

**Herbalism:** There are several herbs that contain iron. Use any of these in your cooking, in salads, or as teas: Dandelion leaves, Nettles, Chickweed, Purslane Coriander leaves, Hawthorn leaves and flowers, Parsley (as a garnish, not in large amounts), Chives, Elderberries, Sorrel.

**Medicinal herbs which contain iron;** Burdock, Rosehips, Skullcap, Hops, Raspberry leaves

### **Cramp**

Cramp during pregnancy occurs because of low calcium levels, particularly in the last three months when the baby needs more calcium. Having enough calcium not only depends on the amount of calcium in your diet but also on hydrochloric acid in your stomach to digest the food properly. It also relies on adequate amounts of vitamin D and fats.

**Calcium deficiency causes:** leg and foot cramps, twitchy muscles, restless legs, irritability, headaches and insomnia.

Cramp may be related to deficiencies of B and D, poor circulation, varicose veins and nervous tension. Help to improve your circulation at night by raising the end of your bed and keeping your legs and feet warm.

**Diet:** Increase calcium in your diet, oats, sesame seeds, millet, figs, parsley and watercress. If you include herbs such as dandelion leaves, nettles, kelp and other seaweeds in soups, stews or salads, these will all boost your calcium intake.

**Herbalism:** Herbal teas rich in calcium are; Wild oats, Meadowsweet, Horsetail, Valerian root, Nettles, Plantain. Drink a cupful two or three times daily.

Cramp bark (guilder rose), can be taken as a hot decoction, singly or in conjunction with any of the above herbs, three times daily.

If you consider that tension or stress could be causing your cramps, then add to the cramp bark: Skullcap, Passionflower, Chamomile, Valerian, Lemon balm, Lime flowers

Ginger, hawthorn or angelica can be taken daily. Any one of them will aid circulation.

**Homeopathy:** magnesium phosphorica and calcaria phosphorica, alternate them frequently. Stop and start as needed.

**Tissue Salts:** Mag. Phos.

**Massage:** A good massage will aid circulation and help prevent cramping in the muscles.

**Aromatherapy:** massage, burn or use in the bath, Lavender, geranium and/or chamomile

**Exercise:** Yoga, walking, swimming.

**Chiropractor / osteopath:** See practitioner

**Acupuncture:** See practitioner

### **Restless legs**

**Homeopathy:** Refer to good book for whole picture, or see a practitioner: caust, rhus tox, sulph, zinc

**Other suggestions:** See cramp

### **Constipation**

A common complaint in pregnancy because of the relaxation of the smooth muscle throughout the body. This means the relaxed bowel is less able to propel the waste to the rectum. As the baby grows the weight tends to impede circulation, aggravating the tendency towards constipation. It is important to keep bowel movements regular to prevent a build up of toxins and/ or the development of piles and varicose veins.

Avoid it by obeying every urge to defecate (you may only get one chance in 24 hours). Ensure that the stool remains soft by drinking plenty of liquid, 2.5 litres/day (4 pints).

**Diet:** Lack of fibre in the diet and an imbalance of bacterial population in the bowel contribute to constipation, causing headaches, aches and pains, irritability, lethargy and insomnia.

A diet high in unrefined carbohydrates and plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables will ensure that plenty of beneficial bacteria predominate in the bowel. Prunes, dried figs

and apricots can be eaten freely as can, as can rhubarb, apples raisins, molasses, honey, sesame seeds and desiccated coconut, all of which are particularly laxative. Drink lemon juice in a cup of warm water half an hour before breakfast or a teaspoon of honey in a cup of hot water each morning before breakfast. Eat a daily green salad (raw food is bulkier than cooked). For a healthy balance of bacteria eat natural live yoghurt. Garlic, onions and leaks are also helpful. Dandelion coffee is a good alternative to tea and coffee as it is slightly laxative and a tonic to the gut.

**Exercise:** Exercise such as swimming, bicycling or yoga will help stimulate you bowels

**Supplements:** Iron tablets can often cause constipation, if you require iron look for natural sources. See diet and supplement suggestions for anaemia. For healthy balance of bacteria take lacto-acidophilus.

**Homeopathy:** See practitioner; aesc, nux vom, sepia and other remedies depending on picture.

**Acupuncture:** See practitioner

**Herbalism:** Traditional herbal remedies for constipation available from health food stores; Syrup of figs, Linseed, Psyllium husks, Slippery elm powder.

The following are herbs that tonify the liver and stimulating action on the bowels.

Make them into infusions or buy them as tinctures and use them as directed;

Chamomile, Peppermint, Burdock, Raspberry leaves, Dandelion root, Ginger,

Liquorice

Make liquorice water by adding 25g of peeled sticks to 1 pint of water. Bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Drink a cup three times daily or as required.

To relax muscles and sooth nerves, take the following herbs as teas and add strong

infusions to the bath water; Lavender, Lemon balm, Cramp bark, Skullcap,

Chamomile, Catmint

**Massage:** Gentle massage to the lower back can help the tension in the bowel.

**Aromatherapy:** Essential oils added to the bath water or to massage oil. Choose from: Geranium, Lavender, Ginger, Chamomile, Ylang ylang

### **Breech or transverse baby**

**Homeopathy:** use from 36<sup>th</sup> week Pulsatilla is the main remedy, sometimes arnica (see practitioner).

**Acupuncture:** see practitioner

**Massage:** Your massage therapist can give you a series of exercises throughout pregnancy to encourage your baby to settle correctly. Massaging your tummy and encouraging your baby to turn by talking to it is also worth a try. Acupressure points on your little toes can also be massaged to encourage the baby to turn.

**Exercise:** Yoga is also very good at encouraging your baby to find the optimum position.

### **Inducing a late baby**

**Homeopathy:** See practitioner: Caulophilum or pulsatilla

**Acupuncture:** See practitioner

**Massage:** There are pressure points around your body that will stimulate your uterus. Your massage therapist can massage these points for you and show you and your partner where they are on your body, so that you can continue to do the same at home.

**Reflexology:** See practitioner

**Diet:** Strong curry

**Herbs:** Black Cohosh, Golden seal

**Other suggestions:** Loads of sex and nipple stimulation.

### **Heartburn**

Caused by progesterone relaxing smooth muscle with the effect of allowing acid contents of stomach to escape.

**Diet:** Eat slowly and take small amounts frequently. Avoid acidic, fatty and spicy foods. Also, tea, coffee, alcohol, sugar and refined carbohydrates – white rice, bread and pasta.

**Exercise:** Yoga positions can help

**Massage therapist:** Massaging your sternum can help, your massage therapist will be able to give you some exercises to help.

**Homeopathy:** See Practitioner: depending on whole picture - with belches, Nux vomica, nat. mur, zinc / at night Merc. Sol

**Acupuncture:** See practitioner

**Aromatherapy:** Massage dilute essential oils gently into the upper abdomen. Choose from Chamomile, Sandalwood, Dill, Lemon balm

**Herbalism:** Make teas from the following herbs, singly or mixed. Sip slowly and frequently to prevent heartburn. Chamomile, Licorice, Ginger, Dandelion root Peppermint, Lemon balm, Meadowsweet

Slippery elm food or tablets made into gruel by adding water and a pinch of ginger or cinnamon powder is very soothing. Take as frequently as necessary. Sipping a little cider vinegar and honey in warm water may also help.

**Supplements:** Avoid buying tablets for heartburn as many of them contain aluminium and prevent your body absorbing iron.

### **Varicose veins**

Common in pregnancy because high progesterone levels relax muscles. Some women have them in their legs and vulva.

**Massage:** As long as massage is not performed directly on top of the affected veins it is perfectly safe to have massage. Massage helps improve blood circulation, reducing pressure on the damaged veins. Always massage with long sweeping strokes towards the heart

**Aromatherapy:** Add to your bath or dilute in base oil and apply directly.

Pine, Frankincense, Lavender, Geranium, Chamomile or Melissa.

Or make a warm foot bath using 6 drops of diluted essential oil in the bowl

Essential oil blend for varicose veins:

2 drops of dill

2 drops lavender

1 drops of lemon

1 drops of coriander

These oils can also be added to 30ml base oil, cream or herbal tinctures. Again, massage above and around the affected vein but never over it.

**Homeopathy:** See practitioner: many remedies including Hamamelis and pulsatilla

**Tissue salts:** Calc. Fluor

**Diet:** foods containing vitamin E, C, and bioflavonoid to help circulation and help blood vessels. Zink and brewers yeast, buckwheat, grains and seeds speeds the healing of damaged veins. Garlic helps circulation.

For haemorrhoids follow the same advice and look at your diet – lots of garlic and foods rich in magnesium (fresh vegetables, whole grains, yeast extract, beans, and dried fruit. Also try flax tea, vegetable juices and pure water.

**Supplements:** B6 taken in B complex

**Herbalism:** Use these herbs as decoctions or infusions or as tinctures. They will improve your circulation and encourage return of blood from the lower part of your body: St. John's wort, Hawthorn, Burdock, Peppermint, Cleavers, Linden blossom.

External treatment: Apply to affected parts with cotton wool or cloth:

1 part distilled witch hazel

1 part glycerol

1 part rose water

Bathe the veins three times / day. This will improve the tone of the veins.

Also, try steeping a handful of calendula flowers in distilled witch hazel for about one hour. Strain liquid and discard flowers before use. Apply to affected parts as above. There are many herbs that are astringents that can be made into decoctions or infusions, cooled and applied frequently with cloths: Calendula, Oak bark, Elderflower, Marjoram, Comfrey, Plantain. They can also be used in tincture form, applied straight or added to an aqueous cream.

**Other suggestions:** Some women find applying neat lemon juice brings relief or if legs and vulva aching severely try putting ice packs on them.

### **Oedema**

Swelling caused by fluid retention in the tissues. Caused by the reduction of the protein albumen in the blood. The increased volume of blood dilutes the protein so allowing blood normally held by osmosis in the blood vessels to seep into surrounding tissues and so they become puffy. Due to gravity most fluid gathers in lower half of the body, hands and sometimes face. Made worse by standing.

**Severe oedema** is when oedema worsens and there is pitting. A hollow remains after pressure is applied with finger tips. Normally appears in calves and ankles, evident in morning on waking and not relieved by rest. Go to Doctor.

**Cause for concern** when it starts suddenly and is linked to protein in the urine and high blood pressure. Very serious as could be toxemia of pregnancy. Go to Doctor. Go to bed and sleep as much as possible.

**Massage:** Massage can greatly relieve oedema, a specialist form of massage called lymphatic drainage is excellent.

**Diet:** Stop drinking fruit juices, even diluted. Eat apples, grapes, raw onions, garlic and asparagus to your diet- they all stimulate the kidneys. Lack of vitamin B6 has been linked to oedema – Take brewers yeast and other foods rich in B6 such as black strap molasses and wheat germ.

**Herbalism:** When oedema is coupled with protein in the urine, false unicorn root. Take lukewarm to cool infusions every 2 hours through the day. Plantain, horsetail and dandelion root may be helpful.

**Homeopathy:** See practitioner: Nat. mur, other remedies like apis mellifica or phosphorus may be useful depending on the whole picture.

### **Pre -eclampsia - Consult your medical practitioner**

Caused by spasm of tiny arteries in the body. Usual symptoms are rapid development of pitting oedema together with protein in the urine and high blood pressure.

It is watched for in regular anti-natal checks. It precedes eclampsia, a very dangerous condition which can occur in the second half of pregnancy, during labour or in the first few days after birth. It involves the sudden onset of fits or convulsions which can seriously threaten the life of mother and baby. A woman can feel fine and it usually gets picked up when the woman has high blood pressure. Later the kidneys leak protein into the urine. This is the reason for frequent blood and urine analysis and measurement of blood pressure – these tests are vital to prevent the silent threat of eclampsia.

Pre-eclampsia is more common in first pregnancies. The placenta is not well embedded in the womb in the first four months of pregnancy so at some point in the second half of pregnancy it outgrows its blood supply and, starved of oxygen and nutrients it starts to malfunction, producing pre-eclampsia.

Some doctors feel it is related to poor diet, lacking in protein and others feel it is an inherited condition. While salt is conventionally restricted in oedema and high blood pressure sufferers, in pregnancy it is not advisable as salt restriction has been associated with both pre-eclampsia and miscarriage.

#### **How to prevent pre-eclampsia**

**Diet:** eat no refined foods, plenty of foods rich in protein, calcium, vitamin B6, magnesium, potassium and natural salicylates (found in fruit, vegetables, potatoes, nuts and seeds). Fatty fish such as mackerel, herring and salmon are also good.

**Exercise:** take plenty to improve oxygen to the placenta and also rest for part of the day.

### **High blood pressure – consult your medical practitioner**

High blood pressure can cause a restriction in the blood supply, and therefore the oxygen supply, to the uterus, the placenta and baby. This lack of oxygen and nutrients could cause growth retardation in the baby or even still birth.

**Diet:** Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, beans and pulses, nuts and seeds, whole grains and pure vegetable oils. Some fish, organic meat and dairy for protein. Eat plenty of foods containing vitamin C every day, to help normalise the circulation and strengthen the blood vessels. Raw garlic and onions help reduce your blood pressure. Do not restrict your salt intake. Tea, coffee, alcohol and cigarettes are best avoided. Plenty of calcium in diet will help muscles relax. Oats, leeks, olive oil, garlic, onions, carrots and barley all regulate blood pressure.

**Supplements:** Brewers yeast is a valuable food supplement as B vitamins help to reduce blood pressure.

**Rest and relaxation:** Stress and tension frequently play a part in high blood pressure. They can cause the walls of blood vessels to tighten and narrow, thus raising the pressure within them. Rest and relaxation, quiet times alone, relaxation exercises, massage or baths in essential oils will all help to counteract the effects of stress through the body. If your blood pressure is worryingly high, then bed rest may be the best remedy.

**Exercise:** Yoga will help you relax as will any frequent and gentle exercise.

**Tissue salts:** Kali phos to calm nerves

**Homeopathy:** See practitioner

**Acupuncture:** See practitioner

**Homeopathy:** Hawthorn flowers, leaves and berries are nature's best remedies for normalising blood pressure. Linden blossom, passion flower, lemon balm, skullcap and cramp bark also relax arteries and soothing away tension. Take singly or mix as teas and take 3-6 times / day.

Nettles and raspberry leaves are also useful. Take dandelion root and leaves to regulate the action of liver and kidneys.

**Other suggestions:** High blood pressure may also be related to imbalances of the kidneys, such as chronic infection. Get your urine analysed for infection and treat problem accordingly.

### Sciatica

**Homeopathy:** Bellis perennis

**Massage:** Sciatic type pain is often caused by muscle tension, a good practitioner will be able to relieve this. If the nerve is trapped the practitioner will pass you onto a chiropractor/ osteopath.

**Chiropractor / osteopath:** see practitioner

### Carpel tunnel

**Homeopathy:** Consult a practitioner or find correct picture in a good book- rhus. Tox, lachesis, ap., ars, calc. carb, lyc, rhus-t, sep

**Massage:** Massage can greatly relieve carpel tunnel by improving circulation to the muscles and nerves. See a practitioner.

**Chiropractor / osteopath:** See practitioner

### Insomnia

Very common, especially in late pregnancy.

**Diet:** : whole food diet essential to maintain normal relaxation of muscles and nerves and to ensure sleep. B vitamins useful especially B6 are particularly helpful - found in brewers yeast, blackstrap molasses and wheat germ.

Dried figs., sesame seeds, molasses parsley, watercress and dairy produce rich in calcium – deficiency can reduce ability to relax.

**Homeopathy:** See practitioner, many remedies available, depending on picture.

**Massage:** Massage is extremely beneficial. Having a massage will relieve any aches and pains that could be stopping you sleeping, relax your muscles, and by improving your blood and lymphatic fluid circulation a massage will improve you and your baby's general well being. See a practitioner who has specialised in pregnancy massage.

**Exercise:** Relaxation exercises such as yoga

**Other suggestions:** Put a few drops of lavender on your pillow and have a glass of water containing a few drops of bach flower rescue remedy to sip on waking. Drink chamomile tea before going to bed. Avoid stimulants such as tea coffee cocoa or chocolate. Take plenty of exercise in fresh air and avoid eating heavy meal too late in evening

**Herbalism:** Take the following as teas or tinctures, singly or in combination. 2-3 cups or teaspoons of tincture at night. Chamomile, lemon balm, passion flower, Skullcap, Catmint, Linden blossom

Cider vinegar and honey in warm water (2 teaspoons of each) can help or a night cap of elderberry juice or celery juice.

**Aromatherapy:** Lavender, chamomile, Melissa – dilute and massage, foot massage or add to a hot foot bath.

### **Thrush**

Common in pregnancy because of hormone change and higher glycogen levels in cells surrounding vagina.

**Diet:** Try to cut out sugar and refined carbohydrates. Eat plenty of raw garlic and olive oil. Eat plenty of live yoghurt and apply to affected area. Improve immune system by eating plenty of foods containing vitamin A, B, and C, zinc, iron, calcium and magnesium.

**Supplements:** Take multi vitamin and mineral (yeast free) daily. Acidophilus.

**Homeopathy:** See practitioner or consult a good book. Many remedies available.

**Herbalism:** Herbs with anti-fungal properties are Calendula, Echinacea, and Peppermint, Pine and Chamomile.

Take as teas three times / day and hold herb soaked pads to vulva. Also put in sitz bath.

**Other suggestions:** Salt baths can bring relief as can tablespoon of lemon juice to ½ pint of water and applied 2-3 times daily.

### **Stretch marks**

**Tissue salts:** Calc. Fluor.

**Diet:** Lack of elasticity can be due to deficiencies in your diet of vitamins E and C Zinc, silica and pantothenic acid B5.

**Massage:** Massage oils into breasts, abdomen and thighs. Coconut, almond, vitamin E, wheat germ and olive oil. Take time to do this every day and use it as an opportunity to get in touch with your baby.

**Aromatherapy:** Neroli and lavender have an affinity for skin, mix into base oil.

### **Bladder and kidney problems-consult your medical practitioner**

Women often have kidney infections in early pregnancy, again due to the relaxation of the smooth muscle. It is important to get on top of it at the first signs of any problems as it can lead to problems such as high blood pressure, anaemia and premature labour. Never ignore the first twinges or even chronic headaches or malaise.

**How to avoid kidney and bladder problems:** Drink at least 4 pints 2litres of liquid to prevent stasis of urine. Apple juice, mineral water, herbal teas, apple cider and honey in warm water, and barley water all suitable.

**Diet:** Important to eat healthily to support the immune system and maintain the correct acid-alkali balance in the body. Eat plenty of whole grains, pulses nuts, fresh fruit and vegetables, and stay away from junk foods, refined carbohydrates, sugar, alcohol, excess meat and animal fats, tea, coffee and chocolate.

**These foods may irritate urinary tubules:** Tomatoes, Oranges, Rhubarb, Spinach, Malt vinegar, Sorrel.

**Therapeutic foods are:** Turnips, Leeks, Garlic, Pineapple, Barley, Onions, Papaya

**General:** At first acute attack, drink 1 pint of mineral water to flush out the system. Then add a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda to a small glass of apple juice which helps make the urine more alkaline.

**Homeopathy:** See practitioner: Place a few drops of calendula tincture in some water and bath vulva after urination.

**Herbalist:** make herbal infusion from one herb from each of the lists of the following:  
Urinary disinfectants for the infection; Echinacea, Chamomile, Meadowsweet  
Plantain, Calendula, Horsetail  
Anti-inflammatory and soothing demulcents; Corn silk, Chamomile, Plantain,  
Meadowsweet, Borage  
Diuretics to flush out the system; Raspberry leaves, Dandelion leaves; Meadowsweet;  
Corn silk, Horsetail, Cleavers  
Relaxants and painkillers to soothe the discomfort of burning pain; Pastille  
Lemon balm Lavender Chamomile Passionflower Skullcap

Follow each cup of herb tea with another half pint of water. Continue every 20 minutes throughout the day and rest as much as possible.

**Other suggestions:** It is possible to get relief from sitting in warm chamomile tea. Or warm compress of chamomile tea over back or abdomen (bladder). Cranberry and bilberry juice are very useful as they have powerful antibiotic affects.  
**Aromatherapy:** Whenever you urinate, wash afterwards very gently with warm water with a drop of lavender or thyme oil.  
Dilute essential oils can be added to bath water, Frankincense, Chamomile, and Bergamot  
Eucalyptus Lavender, Melissa, Pine, Coriander.

### **Tension and anxiety**

**Exercise:** Breathing exercises and yoga are a great way to relax. Lots of exercises can simply be done at home. There are plenty of relaxation CD's on the market that will take you through a step by step process of relaxation. Hypnotherapy is also very popular. A practitioner uses visualisation to relax you. There are now hypnotherapists holding regular classes for pregnant women. Women and their partners learn relaxation techniques for pregnancy and birth.

**Diet:** Eat lots of oats, flapjack and muesli

**Acupuncture:** See practitioner

**Tissue salts:** Kali phos

**Homeopath:** See a practitioner as you will probably need a constitutional remedy.

**Herbalism:** There are several relaxing herbs you can take regularly at any stage of pregnancy, as teas or dilute tinctures. Chamomile, lavender, passionflower, linden blossom, lemon balm, and skullcap will all relax mind and body, reducing tension and anxiety, slowing respiration, lowering blood pressure and relaxing tight muscles. Add strong infusion to bath water, and hand and foot baths.

**Strengthen nerves:** Raspberry leaf tea and partridge berry

**During emotional upheavals, reducing tension and providing energy to help cope with your feelings:** skullcap and wild oats act as tonics to the nervous system

**Relieve cramping pain, tension, uneasiness, nervousness or restlessness during pregnancy that results from stress and tension:** Cramp bark and wild yam.

**Weak, tired and low:** Wild oats, false unicorn root and partridge berry are very useful when you feel weak, tired and low.

**Depressed:** St John's wort, wild oats, cardamom, chamomile, lavender or lemon balm singly or in combinations – add a little liquorice to any of these to sweeten them and support the adrenal glands.

**Tired and heavy later in pregnancy:** rosemary, ginger or wild oats will give you strength and make you feel better.

**Aromatherapy:** boost morale towards the end of pregnancy when each day feels like eternity: Jasmine, Frankincense, geranium and lavender

**Agitated, very nervous, fearful and panicky:** Sandalwood. Burn it as incense or essential oil (in India sandalwood paste between toes, helps to earth, balance and calm).

**Bach flower remedies:** Excellent for easing emotional problems, and easing transition from one phase of life to another. Take mimulus for fear and anxiety; rock rose for panic; mustard for depression, olive for exhaustion; walnut or bottle brush (Australian bush flower remedy) for easing transitions.

### **Preparation for childbirth**

Some women feel quite low just before the birth because of the drop in progesterone levels. Relax and try some of the following.

**Diet:** Eat lots of oats

**Exercise:** Yoga and active birth classes are excellent preparation for childbirth. All the exercises you learn will be useful in labour.

**Relaxation and Hypnotherapy:** Classes and practitioners available, all excellent preparation for childbirth and skills that can be utilised in labour.

**Homeopathy:** See a homeopath for a good constitutional remedy. Buy a birth kit and read up on all the remedies so you and your partner feel ready and empowered for labour.

**Herbalism:** Herbs that prepare the body.

**Raspberry leaves** - ease and shorten labour by influence on uterine contractions and reduce the risk of complications. Take as an infusion once daily from 3<sup>rd</sup> month and 3 times daily from the 6<sup>th</sup> month. Add aromatics such as peppermint, dill, lemon balm or lemon verbena. In last week or so add a pinch of Ginger to each cup of tea. At the first signs of contractions add one teaspoon.

**Partridge berry** – also helps strengthen the uterus and keep you calm. In the last six weeks of pregnancy drink an infusion three times / day.

#### **Culinary herbs**

**Nutmeg** - added to cooking in last few weeks to strengthen and tone uterine muscles.

**Cloves** – add one to cooking. Last week drink clove tea 2-3 times / day.

**Sage** – add to cooking and drink as infusion 2-3 times per day for the last 2 weeks.

#### **Aromatherapy:**

Last 3-4 weeks, dilute essential oils and massage abdomen and lower back, add them to the bath, use as perfumes.

**Rose** is great if you are feeling tense and anxious about the birth, particularly if you are worried about coping when time comes. Helps you relax your whole pelvic region and has slight analgesic affect that can help you control pain.

**Lavender** is a wonderful balancer, calm and soothing if you feel volatile and vulnerable.

**Clary sage** relaxes the uterine muscles and helps prepare them for childbirth. It has antidepressant effects which can be very helpful in the last few days or weeks of pregnancy.

### **Massage perineum and abdomen with wheat germ.**

Massaging your perineum helps you dilate and prevents tearing. Do it at home when you are relaxed and have time to yourself. Massage the oil into your perineum and gently stretch it. You will feel a burning sensation, this is a little like it feels when the baby's head crowns in the second stage of labour.

Aromatherapy: Add to the oil: Rose, lavender, geranium, nutmeg, clove, chamomile and clary sage.

These dilute oils can be added to the bath.

**Herbalism:** Calendula flowers steeped in wheat germ for 3 weeks. Massage oil into the perineum as birth approaches.

### **Child birth**

Child birth is a wonderful and profoundly life changing experience. Keep active (Belly dancing is good) and upright for as long as you can. Use a tens machine to help control the pain of the contractions, lean on the back of a chair and breath into them. Your partner can help you regulate your breathing and stop you tensing your mouth. Take a rest by leaning over a ball, rather than lying down - keep gravity on your side. Visualise a rose opening and keep your mouth relaxed to help your cervix dilate.

**Bach flower remedies:** Rescue remedy, for both mother and birth partner, place a few drops in a bottle of water and sip frequently.

**Exercise:** Yoga and active birth positions are really helpful in labour.

**Hypnotism and Relaxation:** Both very useful methods to help ease labour pains, and speed up dilation.

**Massage:** Massage will help keep you calm, relieve tensions and help with pain control. Pressure points on your body can help to speed up contractions and make them more effective. Various movements and positions will optimise the birth process. Ask your massage practitioner to show your birth partner helpful massage techniques for labour and birth.

**Acupuncture:** Some women have an acupuncturist present to help give pain relief, turn the baby and speed up contractions.

**Dula:** A trained birth partner who will help you through labour and childbirth.

**Homeopathy:** Buy a birth pack. Homeopathy is a fantastic aid to childbirth. No expectant mother should be without one.

This list of remedies has been taken from the Helios birth pack which contains 18 small bottles of homeopathic pills and a very clear, simple and comprehensive booklet containing a list of symptoms and which remedy would be appropriate to use. Using a birth pack can be a god send for your birth partner. It gives them a role in your birth, and empowers both of you to pro-actively enhance your experience of labour, childbirth and recovery.

\*can be sipped frequently in water

### ***Aconite***

Used for threatened miscarriage or premature labour after severe frights/violent experiences. Fearful, may predict own or baby's death. Labour too quick, pains violent. Mother feels panicky, distressed, despairing. Heartbeat rapid. Newborns in shock, colour normal but not crying / moving. Worse at night, around midnight, touch, noise. Better: fresh air

### ***Arnica* \***

No.1 trauma remedy. Encourages healing, especially of bruising, controls bleeding; reduces swelling and likelihood of puss formation. Take it at the beginning of labour and then again if you start to feel tired. Reduces exhaustion and gives second wind, especially for long, slow painful labours. Give routinely after birth to speed recovery/alleviate battered and bruised feeling. Use for shock when someone claims to be alright but clearly isn't. Worse: being touched or examined.

### ***Bellis perennis***

Before birth can relieve sciatica (shooting nerve pain down the leg) caused by position of the baby. Reduces the pain of overstretched uterine ligaments. "Refreshes the parts arnica cannot reach". Excellent remedy for healing injury to deep tissue, which is sore /bruised. Particularly useful after caesarean or forceps delivery.

### ***Calendula***

Spreads the healing process of cuts/lacerations/wounds. Use to heal perineum after birth, tears/episiotomy wounds. Dilute tincture in water and dab onto wounds, put into jug of water and pour over perineum when urinating. Add to the bath water (20 drops). Take tablets internally if there is pus present or the pains are causing particular discomfort. Can be alternated with other post birth remedies (e.g. Arnica or Bellis perennis)

### ***Carbo veg***

This remedy is the first to think of if you save somebody from drowning. Complete state of collapse due to oxygen starvation. Body cold, limp and pale or blue. Use in conjunction with other efforts to revive respiration. Hold one pill inside lower lip of patient, including newborns, until symptoms alleviate. In foetal distress due to oxygen starvation, give to mother to reduce risk of asphyxia to baby. Less severe cases: extreme sluggishness; little or no vitality; coldness. Face appears pinched pale, sallow or blue. Excellent remedy for excruciating trapped wind (e.g. after caesarean).

### ***Caulophyllum*. \***

Can be used to induce labour and in the early stages of labour to establish strong productive contractions. Do not use routinely. If needed contractions will be centred in lower in lower half of uterus, whilst top (fundus) feels flabby. Although sharp and painful, contractions are short, ineffective, spasmodic and unstable moving around the bladder, groin or thighs. Sometimes they will slow or stop completely, due to exhaustion. Cervix fails to dilate. Symptoms include chilliness, shivering, trembling and irritability. May be thirsty during contractions. If thirst less and caulophyllum fails think of Gelsinium.

### ***Chamomilla***

Extreme over-sensitive and violent bad temper. May demand help one moment and reject it the next. Abusive and argumentative, especially with loved ones. Find pains unbearable. May scream frequently or say "I want to die". Feels and looks overheated. Better being uncovered. Worse evening, fresh air; company; being spoken to or stared at.

### ***Cimicifuga***

Very similar to caulophyllum, contractions in lower half of uterus. painful, sharp, spasmodic. Cervix remains rigidly closed/fails to dilate properly. Differences are contractions move from side to side or down into the hips or thighs; gestures, speech and actions become horribly disjointed; physical symptoms often alternate with intense mental/emotional symptoms. Full of dreadful fears/foreboding, perhaps because of a previous experience of birth, miscarriage or abortion. Sense that “I can’t carry on” is meant in the most profound sense. Chilly. Worse: Cold, damp. Better: Lying on left side.

### ***Gelsinium***

Next best choice if caulophyllum fails to produce good strong contractions. Very useful if labour is slow and sluggish. Physical heaviness, even eyelids droop, producing a dazed stupefied appearance which belies the mental alertness that is there. Body paralysed by exhaustion or “stage fright” Muscular weakness leads to trembling. Trembling, chilly, possibly shivers up and down the pain. Thirstless. Worse: Physical exertion; over excitement; receiving bad news (e.g. that cervix has dilated less than expected). Better: Sweating; urination; being alone.

### ***Hypericum***

First aid remedy for damage to nerve-rich areas. Pains shoot along nerves with terrible intensity. Most useful after labour. Particularly after caesareans, epidurals, episiotomies, forceps deliveries. Alternate with other necessary trauma remedies (e.g. Arnica, Bellis Perennis, Calendula). Worse: cold, pressure; touch.

### ***Ipecac***

Labour pains or bright red haemorrhaging with constant violent nausea. Face is blue with dark rings under eyes. Hot and cold sweats. Worse: at night; for food or sight or smell of it.

### ***Kali carb***

Useful in back ache labours, where nagging pain is felt in back, buttocks, thighs. The mother to be is often extremely irritable, yet needs company. Posterior presentations where labour gets stuck. Back ache greatly relieved by very firm pressure. Headache during labour. Chilliness after a contraction. Worse: night and early hours of morning; touch; noise. Better; warmth

### ***Kali phos\****

Often recommended for exhaustion. Very helpful during labour if no other strong symptoms. Best taken between contractions. Can be used often throughout labour whenever energy is low. Useful for attendants too (see arnica)

### ***Phytolacca***

A post-labour remedy that treats cracked nipples, blocked milk ducts and mastitis which may occur during breast feeding. Pains intense; radiate out from around nipple, sometimes into shoulder or arm.

### ***Pulsatilla***

Can be used from 36<sup>th</sup> week to encourage breech/transverse baby to turn. Also very important during labour. Easy to spot when needed because of clear emotional symptoms: Weepiness; clinginess and pleading for help. Contractions short, weak or stop entirely. Pain may be felt in back. Also, faintness; nausea; thirstlessness; vomiting. Worse: Stuffy room; twilight; getting cold or wet. Better: Fresh air; moving around; sympathy and company.

### ***Secale***

Like pulsatilla intolerant of stuffy rooms, but emotionally more stupefied in labour, with much longer contractions. If these stop trembling may start. Most often used to antidote ill-effects of syntometrine, often routinely injected to speed up expulsion of placenta. Take immediately after where possible. Can be used to encourage a retained placenta to be pushed out naturally, if contractions are too weak.

### ***Sepia***

Pains severe; dragging down; much relieved by exercise. Emotionally feel irritable or indifferent to loved ones; respond badly to sympathy. Sluggish and weepy. Useful in treating uterine prolapse with strong bearing-down sensation. Think of Sepia if children are born close together, giving the body insufficient time in between to recover. Worse: fasting; touch; staying in same position. Better after eating; moving around.

### ***Staphisagria***

Most often used after labour, particularly if the mother feels anger, resentment or humiliation because of medical procedures or interventions during labour and does not want to be touched. Consider it if the birth involved any of the following; intrusive or painful internal examination; insertion of catheter; an enema; forceps delivery; episiotomy; stitches; use of stirrups. Pains are stitching and smarting.

**Herbalism:** prepare herb teas in thermos flask, or select tinctures you may need.

Also possible to make ice cubes of infusions.

**For weak, irregular contractions:** Black and blue cohosh.

Blue cohosh – relax uterine muscles, relieve restlessness or irritability. Also helps with vigour of birth effort

Black cohosh relaxation and contractions less painful. Good if panicky

Raspberry leaf relax uterus, calm and strengthen the nerves, normalise contractions and reduce pain.

Sip tea or dilute tinctures 10 drops in little water, or strain under tongue 15-30 minutes.

Other herbs Feverfew, golden seal, birth root, cloves, nutmeg, sage and myrrh.

**Overstrong and painful contractions, fear and tension:** Wild yam for those who are tense and nervous, Cramp bark - relaxant and reduces uterine tension

Skullcap- excellent relaxant and tonic to nervous system, good in combination with Blue cohosh.

***Promote strong regular contractions, increase circulation and helps prevent post-partum haemorrhage:*** One drop each of tincture of capsicum and myrrh

***Relax and relieve pain:*** Motherwort and partridge berry.

***If can't push baby out:*** try chewing good quality ginseng root - healing and gives you a burst of energy.

***Third stage***

***Prevent retained placenta:*** partridge berry, black haw, birth root, black cohosh, Raspberry leaves.

***Massage:*** Use to massage in oils, relax mother and relieve back pain. Use of pressure points will help stimulate contractions.

***Aromatherapy:***

***Stimulate contractions, uplifting:*** clove, jasmine, nutmeg, cinnamon, juniper or myrrh. Vaporise or dilute and massage into lower back.

***Intense back pain:*** massage in dilute chamomile, rosemary or nutmeg

***Intense pain in 2<sup>nd</sup> stage:*** massage in to lower back, dilute Clary sage, geranium, lavender, ylang ylang and rose.

***Stops hyperventilating. Calming for the nerves, relaxant to the muscles and help to slow down and deepen breathing:*** Vaporise any of the following, Frankincense, neroli and clary sage

***Clary sage:*** helps make birth easier by specifically relaxing effect on uterine muscles. Place a few drops in water and make a cold or hot compress. Apply to lower back or lower abdominal muscles.

***Aromatherapy birth blend***

6 drops Clary sage

4 drops geranium

2 drops rose

2 drops ylang ylang

in 30ml oil

## **Bibliography and useful addresses**

**The New Pregnancy and Childbirth – choices and challenges, by Sheila Kitzinger.** Publisher, Dorling Kindersley, 2003. ISBN 0 7513 6438 X

**Homeopathy for Mother and Baby – pregnancy, birth and the post – natal year, by Miranda Castro.** Publisher, Macmillan London, 1992. ISBN 0 333 55748 4

**The Complete Woman’s Herbal – A manual of healing herbs and nutrition for personal well being and family care, by Anne McIntyre.** Publisher, Gaia Books Ltd, 1999. ISBN 1 85675 135 X

### **Addresses:**

**Ainsworths Homeopathic Pharmacy (Birth pack)**  
38 New Cavendish Street  
London W1M 7LH  
Tel: 071 – 935 5330

**G. Baldwin and Co. (Herb suppliers)**  
171 Walworth Road,  
London SE17 1RW  
Tel: 071-703 5550

**Helios Homeopathic pharmacy (Birth pack)**  
97 Camden Rd  
Tunbridge Wells  
Kent TN1 2QP  
Tel: 8092 536393

**Bio-care Ltd (Supplement supplier)**  
T 0121 433 3727  
Lakeside  
180 Lifford Lane  
Kings Norton  
Birmingham B30 3NU

**Purple Flame Aromatherapy (Essential oil suppliers)**  
St Johns Spinney  
Gun Hill  
New Arley  
Coventry CV7 8BR  
Tel: 01676 542542

Gun Hill  
New Arley  
Coventry CV7 8BR  
Tel: 01676 542542