

Birth Preparation using Acupressure

Optimising your bodies beneficial responses

Acupressure can be used from 36 weeks to encourage beneficial hormonal responses for labour preparation and encourage the baby to move into an optimal position. Recent research reports reduced caesarean sections when acupressure is used in labour ⁽¹⁾ and acupressure has also been reported to significantly reduce the need for epidurals and caesarean sections when used as part of a complimentary antenatal intervention. ⁽²⁾

This worksheet outlines how you can use acupressure as “homework” for labour preparation from 36 weeks and when you have a time limit for the onset on labour.

The acupressure labour preparation techniques below can be used from 36 weeks, 3 times a week, increasing at 38 weeks to every 2- 3 days until labour commences.

Further information on point location and use during labour, including techniques to stimulate these points for yourself, can be found in additional handouts at <https://acupuncture.rhizome.net.nz/acupressure/>

Acupressure as Labour preparation: From 36 weeks. Massage (5 mins each channel)

GB 21



BL 32



SP 6



KID 1



LIV 3

- Start from the top of the neck and massage towards the shoulder tip, releasing any tight areas as you pass through GB 21.
- Start above BL 32 and massage towards the sacrum and out over the buttocks to release any tight areas.
- Start at the shin bone on the inner leg and massage in small circles with the thumb to the side of the Tibia bone passing through SP 6 until you reach the calf muscles. Only work to the level of comfort as this point may be tender.
- Holding KID 1 with an index finger, place thumb on top of foot and massage up the space between the big toe and second toe until you reach bone.

If you know you have a baby in a posterior position you can add tapping to BL 67 as discussed in the next section

Labour Preparation for VBAC, Medical induction or for Rupture of Membranes

When you have a time limit for the onset on labour you can 'step up' the acupressure stimulation. Increasing the pressure so that there is specific pressure on the acupuncture points as per the acupuncture use during labour worksheet. This can be used so that the GB 21 and BL 32 are stimulated at least twice a day for 5 mins each and LI 4, SP 6 and BL 67 points every 2 hours. BL 67 can be used through tapping with a fingernail or pen end for 1 min each toe. This can be 3-4 days before your date for a VBAC, a scheduled medical induction, however if your membranes have ruptured you can commence immediately.

GB 21



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjuQadqgkY8>

BL 32



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmlHAisOtyY>

LI 4



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKxBsmKDv>

SP 6



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdK61TSSKD4>

BL 67



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-SHFxdSkRc>

It is recommended that if you do not have a medical time limit for the onset of labour only labour preparation techniques are used. Although the use of the acupressure points as above may stimulate the onset of contractions, this has the potential to result in a labour that does not proceed in the same way as it would have with spontaneous onset. In part this may be because optimal maternal hormonal levels are only reached a few days before the onset of spontaneous labour, and this is also a time when physiological processes for the baby, including reduced amniotic fluid within their lungs and the production of surfactant (related lung function and thought to trigger the onset of labour), take place. It is therefore ideal even when reaching the 'magic 40' weeks to allow as many days as possible for these beneficial processes to occur before labour commences.

Further information on these acupressure points are available:

<http://acupuncture.rhizome.net.nz/acupressure/>

<https://www.udemy.com/acupressure-for-labour/?couponCode=ACUPRESSURE25>

Phone app: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/acupressure-for-natural-pain/id604942630>

References

- 1 Smith CA, Collins CT, Levett KM, Armour M, Dahlen HG, Tan AL, Mesgarpour B. (2020) Acupuncture or acupressure for pain management during labour. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2020, Issue 2. Art. No.: CD009232. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD009232.pub2
- 2 Levett KM, Smith CA., Bensoussan A & Dahlen HG. (2016). Complementary therapies for labour and birth study: a randomised controlled trial of antenatal integrative medicine for pain management in labour. *BMJ Open*, 2016 Jul 12;6(7): e010691. DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2015-010691.

Please reference all images <https://acupuncture.rhizome.net.nz/acupressure/>

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Online TeleHealth consultations available <https://acupuncture.rhizome.net.nz/about-debra/>