

# Powerful Beginnings

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## Acupuncture and Your Pregnancy By: Dr Fiona McCulloch BSc ND

Pregnancy is a time when a variety of unique health conditions can arise, and yet it's also a time when our bodies and developing babies are very sensitive to medications. For this reason, acupuncture can be a very helpful treatment for many common disorders as, when done skillfully, has no harmful effects for mother or fetus.

Acupuncture works on the idea that energy or "Qi" moves through different channels through the body. This often correlates to nerve and circulatory pathways in western medicine. When illness arises, it is often due to a blockage of the movement of this Qi in the body. Acupuncture helps to release this blockage and allow the natural balance of energy flow to return to the body. It provides a gentle stimulus which sends a message to the self healing mechanisms in the body. The needles used are very tiny and produce almost no discomfort, but instead feel tingly or slightly achy as they are placed to the point. Most patients describe acupuncture as a very relaxing and pleasant form of treatment.

### Acupuncture for Nausea and Vomiting of Pregnancy

Nausea and vomiting is such a common condition of pregnancy, but it can be debilitating for so many moms to be. Acupuncture has a long his-

tory of effectiveness for this condition and many studies have shown that it has significant benefits. The most famous acupuncture point for nausea is found on the wrist, and you can do acupressure on it yourself to relieve nausea. If you take your index and second finger and place them at your wrist, the point is found directly above your fingers in the middle of the inside of your wrist. Press this point for 5 seconds vigorously, every 10 minutes until the nausea reduces. For in office treatments, electronic stimulation is often done at this point, as it provides a much stronger effect. Other points are chosen to balance the digestion and liver which are typically quite blocked with nausea and vomiting of pregnancy.

### Acupuncture for Sciatica and Back Pain

Especially towards the end of pregnancy, back pain and sciatica can arise, as the uterus expands, and ligaments shift in position to accommodate your growing baby. This can result in quite a bit of discomfort, especially at night while sleeping. Acupuncture can be used to ease this pain, as it improves blood flow and relaxation effects in the muscles and ligaments that are strained, and helps to release spasms.

### Acupuncture and Labour/Delivery

I have often used acupuncture with great success for women whose babies are past due. It

is a very powerful technique, that can allow women to choose a more natural method to induce labour. Acupuncture gently helps to stimulate the labour process, and several points have been found in research to stimulate uterine contractions.

Often this technique is done with electronic acupuncture on the feet and hands, and most women will feel contractions beginning after the first or second treatment.

Another way acupuncture can be very helpful during delivery, is as a pain management technique during labour. Studies have found that acupuncture reduces the need for epidurals and pain medication interventions during labour. It also reduces stress and can provide a calming effect for the mother as she goes through her labour process.

Pregnancy is one of the most wonderful times of a woman's life, and yet it can also be challenging if health conditions arise. Acupuncture is one of the safest ways to help ensure balance in the body and promote health. There are many more conditions that acupuncture can benefit ranging from prevention of miscarriage, to post partum concerns. Acupuncture works with the inherent wisdom of your body's own healing processes and has safely assisted thousands of women during their pregnancies.

Dr McCulloch is a member of the Association of Perinatal Naturopathic Doctors and co-founder of White Lotus Naturopathic Clinic.

## WARMTH for Birthing

Use this acronym to help you remember a variety of comfort tools and techniques to help during birthing.

**W** - water. Water is a great tool to help ease muscle tension. If you find water very enjoyable, consider a water birth.

**A** - awareness of the breath. A slow breathing pace brings fresh oxygen to the body which helps relieve pain. A prenatal yoga class can help you build this skill.

**R** - relaxation. Create an environment of comfort no matter where you are birthing. Play music you enjoy, look at encouraging photos,

**M** - movement. Swaying, slow dancing, sitting on a birth ball are all options that allow your body to use gravity and open the pelvis.

**T** - touch. Practice massage strokes during pregnancy to see what is comfortable. Soft touch works well too, so don't leave that out.

**H** - heart. Birthing is an intimate and life-changing journey. Let your heart be open to the changes, both in your body and mind. If you are supporting a woman in labour, believe in her body's ability to birth and let you know you are there no matter what.



**“The hormones released during kangaroo care help breastfeeding moms relax and increase their milk supply.”**

## Kangaroo Care

Kangaroo care also known as skin-to-skin is a nurturing contact between parent and baby.

Some of the benefits of holding your baby close include regulating body temperature, heart rate, and blood sugar levels. It helps parents bond to their new baby in an environment that recreates the womb.

Skin to skin contact allows easy access for breastfeeding and the hormones released during kangaroo care help breastfeeding moms relax and increase their milk supply.

Want to give it a try? A few easy steps to get you started!

1. Hold baby against a bare chest with baby's head up.
2. Baby is dressed in only a diaper.
3. Cover baby and the caregiver with a light blanket. You can also use a wrap or a sling.
4. If baby wants to breast-feed, allow them to nurse on demand.

## Sibling Preparation Tips

We can't forget about the special people in our lives who are also going through changes when you are expecting a baby.

Here are some ways to make that transition a little easier for them (and you).

Talk a lot about babies and what

they do as newborns. If you can, take them to see other babies and discuss interacting with them gently. Don't forget to read books about babies, being a sibling, and

After the baby is born, make sure you plan time with your other children. When you have

visitors, allow your older child or children to introduce the baby to them. Have special toys or books set aside to play with when you are nursing.

The most important thing is to let them know they are loved unconditionally!



### Community Highlight—La Leche League Canada

La Leche League is an international organization that provides support to breastfeeding moms and babies.

It is run by mothers who volunteer their time to help other. Each leader receives breastfeeding training and has personally breastfed for at least one year. They network with other health care professionals and stay current on breastfeeding research.

In the GTA there are several groups that meet monthly to discuss different breastfeeding topics. The meetings are four in a series which includes preparing for baby, advantages of breastfeeding, avoiding breastfeeding challenges, as well as nutrition and weaning.

There is something for everyone who attends a La Leche League meeting whether you are nursing a newborn or a toddler. Preg-

nant women are welcome to attend the meetings too. Here they will learn breastfeeding techniques, have the opportunity to network with other moms, have access to a lending library and of course have the support of the leaders.

Interested? Visit their website: [www.lllc.ca](http://www.lllc.ca)

Have a breastfeeding question? Call: 416-483-3368

### Book Review—The Doula Advantage

Do you wonder what a doula could do for you? This book lays it out in an easy read format. It is a good combination of information and humour. It is also not too long to add to a prenatal reading list.

It provides an overview of the different types of doulas and how they support women through pregnancy, labour, and the early weeks with their new arrival. It does not focus

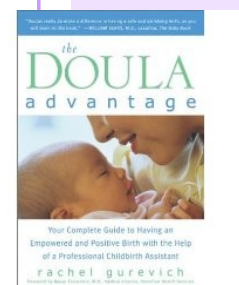
on any particular birthing style but instead is very inclusive for families planning a home birth, hospital birth, or medically supported birth.

One of the highlights of this book it is provides a starting point for interview questions when you are searching for the doula that is a right fit for you. It even has space for you to write making life a little bit easier for you!

In each section, there are numerous examples from mothers and their partners about what a doula has done for their family.

Are you thinking of reading this book and you are a client? Talk to us about borrowing it from our lending library!

The Doula Advantage is written by Rachel Gurevich.



### Feature Food—Quinoa

Quinoa is a grain that is very high in protein that also has a balance of amino acids that are not found in wheat or rice. It is high in fibre and is gluten-free.

To prepare quinoa, soak it in water and rinse. Cooking quinoa is very similar to rice; two cups of water to one cup of grain brought to a simmer for 14-18

minutes. Stocks can be substituted for water to add flavor.

Quinoa can also be served for breakfast. Try to mix it with honey, almonds and berries for a great start to the day.



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We are on Twitter!  
[@birthispowerful](https://twitter.com/birthispowerful)

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We provide professional doula and childbirth education classes for growing families in Toronto and the GTA.

We believe that all women are birthing goddesses. We believe in their bodies ability to birth their babies in a way that works for their individual family.

No matter what your plans are for pregnancy or birthing, we are here to support and empower your birth experience.

### **PROMOTION!**

If you are one of the three first families to call for doula services in 2010, you will receive TWO extra postpartum visits at no extra charge! Be quick and call today!