



Getting the Point

The Women's Clinic @ Uxbridge Newsletter

Spring 2003



Spring is the time of nature's great surge of growth. We can feel the shift in energy, and we can almost see the daily changes in the plants around us. Nature is alive and exultant! Spring is a good time to take stock of our own energy. This is the time to "exert the will for life" as the Chinese classics say. In this edition we focus on fertility and look at what acupuncture has to offer.

LOVE YOUR LIVER

In the Five Elements theory of acupuncture, spring is said to be the time of the Liver. The Liver gives us the power to go forward through life. It is responsible for maintaining a smooth flow. It does this on a physical level by helping us to move easily and gracefully. It does this on an emotional level by helping us to know when to be assertive and when to yield appropriately. The energy of the Liver is like that of a tree that can sway in the wind whilst remaining firmly rooted. The Liver is also concerned with planning and organising, with taking things forward, with achieving our goals.

So, how can we nourish this powerful, positive and wonderful energy? Here are a few tips:

Cleanse the Liver by incorporating small amounts of sour food into the daily diet.

- Start the day by drinking a glass of warm water flavoured with a squeeze of lemon juice, or with some cider vinegar and honey.
- Mix olive oil with lemon juice and cayenne pepper, and use as a salad dressing or take in small doses as a Liver stimulant.
- Eat plenty of fresh, dark green vegetables. These have a mild sour taste that is beneficial to the Liver.

Avoid congesting the Liver

- Minimise the intake of saturated fats, over-salted foods, processed foods, and over-sweetened foods.
- Avoid overeating, especially rich or fatty foods.
- Incorporate moderate amounts of green salads and sprouted seeds into the diet.

Nourish the Liver with activities

- Exercise and stretching are essential for the Liver energy. Walking purposefully is an easy activity to incorporate into our daily pattern, and is good for the Liver.
- Be creative! Exercising our creative nature also nourishes the Liver, so indulge that desire to paint a picture, plant a garden, or create a dance!
- Get plenty of rest and relaxation. The Liver's desire for activity needs to be balanced with the ability to take "time out".



BUILDING YOUR HEALTH FOR PREGNANCY

A baby is a huge commitment to the future, and good health the greatest gift you can give. If you are planning to conceive it makes sense for both parents to spend some time getting their own health into the best possible shape health.

If you have been taking the contraceptive Pill, it is a good idea to stop three to six months before a planned conception so the body has time to adjust and rebalance.

You may want to change your diet. If you can, it is a good idea to include more organic food. Herbicides, pesticides and chemical additives in food affect its nutritional quality and can cause vitamin depletion. Folic acid supplements are recommended.

Moderate exercising whilst trying to conceive is good (it is easier to stay fit than to get fit during pregnancy!). It can also lead to an easier labour, a quicker recovery time - and help you to regain your figure more quickly.

Giving up smoking and cutting down on alcohol are two very significant ways to increase your chances of having a healthy baby. Smoking and drinking to excess make it harder to conceive and increase the risk of miscarriage. During pregnancy, they carry further risks to the health of the baby.

WHAT IF I CAN'T CONCEIVE?

There are many reasons why a woman might find it difficult to conceive. If you have been trying for more than 6 months, you should discuss this with your GP and arrange for tests. It is important to establish the possible causes for the difficulty, as different options will be available.

It is also a good idea to visit your acupuncturist, who will be able to give supportive treatment to help with stress and to regulate the imbalances that may be affecting conception.

Acupuncture can support women having IVF. Treatment can help regulate the cycle, increasing the possibility of conception. Holistic treatment can also strengthen a woman's constitution and well being. Part of the consultation may include encouraging you to become stronger before undertaking or repeating IVF treatment.

Your acupuncturist may suggest ways for you to boost your chances of conception. Every woman is different, so it is important to have a full diagnosis. Some examples of factors that can contribute to difficulty conceiving are:

- Demanding physical work, exercise or sport
- Excessive consumption of cold foods or iced drinks, greasy food and dairy produce
- Emotional factors such as stress, anger, worry. This is a real double bind, as being unable to conceive when you desperately want a baby is incredibly distressing
- Exposing the lower back to cold, or walking barefoot on cold floors

Your acupuncturist will ask you about your periods, as these can help to diagnose the cause of infertility. Periods which are very light, heavy, dark and clotted, painful, long or short, irregular, infrequent, etc, all point to different diagnoses in Chinese medicine.

POST-NATAL CARE



For many new mothers, a feeling of disappointment can often follow the challenges and joy of childbirth. While this is partly related to changes in hormones, there are also strong cultural influences at work. In the West, new mothers are expected to be “back to normal” six weeks after birth, and they are often expected to resume their daily tasks shortly after delivery. The focus of attention shifts sharply from Mum to Baby, and very little attention is paid to helping restore and nourish the mother.

Other cultures offer important contrasts to this. There are traditions that celebrate motherhood with practices that honour the mother’s body after delivery, and help to bring her back to optimum health. In India, **daily massage** may be given to the mother during the 40 days following the birth. This restores the body to its pre-pregnancy state, and is seen as a time of bodily purification that takes place before the woman returns to her daily chores.

“**Mother-roasting**” is another common practice in many eastern cultures. This warming process aids recovery by restoring the mother’s energy, and helps restore the uterus. There are many ways to apply this technique: in China, a lighted stick of moxa (a herb commonly used in Chinese medicine) is passed over the lower abdomen and lower back.

Rest after delivery is another important practice. In countries of the Far East, women “do the month” after giving birth. This is a period of complete rest for the new mother, when all her needs are taken care of – traditionally by her mother-in-law! A survey of Chinese-American women living in California revealed that they thought that “doing the month” was beneficial to their health, and would prevent post-natal depression. Although a period of rest used to be a normal part of Western post-natal treatment, women

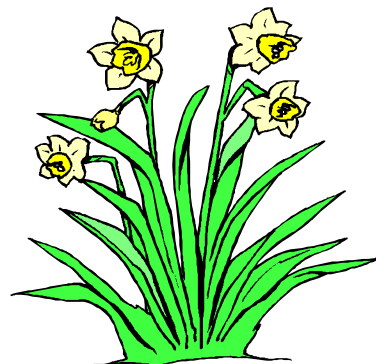
today are expected to return to normal very soon after giving birth.

Diet also plays a part in the restorative process. In China, chicken soup is a classic tonic for the immediate postpartum period, fortified with ginger and a Blood-strengthening herb called Dong Quai. Herbal treatment is also common, and women are often given a formula called *Women’s Eight Precious Tea Pills* to nourish the Blood and restore energy.

Fortunately, in the UK, new mothers can restore and revitalise themselves using many of the practices of Chinese medicine. Here is a list of just some of the symptoms that can be treated effectively with acupuncture, moxa, and/or patent herbal treatments:

- Afterpains
- Breastfeeding problems (lack of milk, blocked ducts, mastitis)
- Constipation
- Haemorrhoids
- Joint pain
- Mental and emotional problems
- Perineal soreness
- Persistent lochia
- Puerperal infection
- Recovery from Caesarian section
- Sweating
- Tiredness
- Urinary problems

While you are planning your pregnancy and delivery, why not go a step further and make a plan for your recovery phase as well? This can give vital support for a new mother’s emotional and physical well-being, and help to ensure that motherhood is a joyous experience to be treasured.





YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

I went all through the winter without a single cold. Now the spring's come, I've got a really bad one – and lots of other people have too. Why is that?

The temperature varies a lot at this time of year – chilly one day, warm the next. With the days getting longer as well, people go out doors a lot more, and gladly discard some of their heavy winter clothing.

Our bodies are suddenly exposed to chills and changing temperatures, which makes us vulnerable to colds and flu. The Chinese say, “wind is the spearhead of disease”. Remember our old sayings – “wrap up warm”, “ne'er cast a clout till May be out” and “don't sit on damp grass”. Our temperamental weather is not the only enemy, we also need to be careful if we work in an air-conditioned office or sit under a fan.

Acupuncture can ward off a brewing cold, or alleviate the symptoms of a developed one. In the longer term, it can help people who tend to get a lot of colds.

I'm pregnant, and I'm worried, because there's a history of long labours in my family! Could acupuncture help shorten my labour without any detrimental effect on my baby or me?

Acupuncture has been used to help in labour. Its underlying principle of balancing energy helps the labour proceed more smoothly, without any side effects. It's a help to mother and baby if they aren't distressed by a long and painful labour

I've heard that acupuncture can turn a breech baby. It sounds like magic! Is it true?

Yes, it is! As with any form of intervention, it can't be guaranteed, but treatment on an acupuncture point on the little toe has helped to turn breech babies. This treatment is much less invasive than other methods, too.

My friend had terrible postnatal depression. I understand it's quite common. Could acupuncture have helped?

Acupuncture has been used to treat postnatal depression successfully. As with all

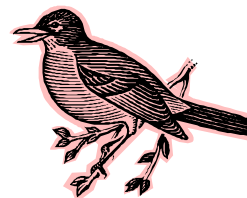
treatments, a full history is taken, and the woman is treated holistically, not just for her often very distressing symptoms.

I'd really like to stop smoking and with the better weather I feel more motivated to try. I tried nicotine replacement before and didn't like it. Could acupuncture help?

Acupuncture can be very effective in alleviating nicotine cravings. It can also help to deal with anxiety and the urge to replace cigarettes with sweets, thus helping to avoid weight gain!

**NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY:
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We are a group of practitioners who trained together at the College of Integrated Chinese Medicine. We are all members of the British Acupuncture Council. We practice both the Five Element and Traditional Chinese Medicine styles of acupuncture. We are all committed to ongoing supervision and training and sharing insights from our particular specialities in the interest of better care for our patients. These currently include women's health, pain relief, musculo-skeletal conditions, addiction and detox and acupuncture research.



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Book a free 15-minute appointment now to discuss how The Women's Clinic can help you

Or visit the website at:
www.womens-clinic.co.uk