

Massage in Pregnancy & during birth

Pregnancy places a lot of stress on a woman's body. From the moment of conception, muscles and tendons are affected by hormones that contribute to a number of discomforts during pregnancy. As your baby grows they become more obvious! Backache, headaches, tension and insomnia are all very common complaints – complaints that may be relieved through touch/ massage.

Massage can be used effectively right throughout pregnancy and in labour to unblock energy and release tension. The benefits of any massage for anybody (pregnant or not) include:

- reduction in stress and muscle tension (and therefore great for relaxation)
- increase in blood circulation to the area
- improvement in joint mobility
- reduction in fluid retention, and
- increases the hormone *serotonin*, for sleep

You may also have heard of *shiatsu* or *acupuncture/ acupressure*. Traditional eastern methods of healing have included massaging certain points in the body since ancient times. Today many massage therapists have an understanding of the effects these points have on your body. There are some points that should not be touched during pregnancy as they have an effect on the uterus. These are the same points that are useful to massage during labour.

During Labour, the use of massage and acupressure points helps to:

- release natural endorphins
- block pain receptors to the brain
- dilate your cervix
- improve the efficiency of contractions

A visit to a trained pregnancy massage therapist can be a great way to relieve stiff and aching muscles from the extra weight you carry from your pregnancy. They can also give your partner some tips on areas to avoid when dealing with your backache at home.

Our Birthing Sense Massage therapist gives some excellent tips for pregnancy massage, massage during labour and baby massage in our Birth Education DVD series. Watch it at home, or ask your local massage therapist to talk to you about massage during your pregnancy. Another great way to relax is to give yourself a face massage. Type 'birthing sense self face massage' into *youtube* and follow Tarni. Most people have left great comments about how good they feel after watching it.

Happy massaging!

