

Acupressure for Pain Relief in Labour

Optimising your bodies beneficial responses

I began writing about acupressure techniques for pain relief in Labour in 1996. This free online booklet detailed techniques I had been teaching to midwives/couples and their support people and to the best of my knowledge, was the first time acupressure was presented as an alternative to using acupuncture during labour. There was immediate interest and acupressure is now promoted by acupuncturists and birthing professionals internationally. There is also quality research reporting acupressure during labour reduced the incidence of caesarean sections ⁽¹⁾ and the need for epidurals and caesarean sections when used as part of a complimentary antenatal intervention. ⁽²⁾ It is my hope that acupressure continues to be developed as a technique to facilitate positive birthing experiences and I welcome any feedback on your use of these points. My 'Top Tip's for using these acupressure points in labour would be:

- There are no complicated instructions! Your support people just need to follow your feedback to apply firm continuous pressure that you find comfortable.
- You will usually notice beneficial effects with a few minutes – this may take the form of a reduction in the intensity of the contractions, a feeling of relaxation/calmness or other changes that feel beneficial. If the pressure feels painful or irritating, they are not the right points for you at this time in your labour.
- Start using these points early in labour and experiment to find what you prefer and remember that you are in control and that the points you prefer may change as you progress through your labour.

Below are links to short videos discussing point location and suggestions for their use. Further information on using acupressure for labour preparation can be found at <https://acupuncture.rhizome.net.nz/acupressure/>.

For Pain relief in labour

GB 21



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjuQadggkY8>

BL 32



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

The Buttock Point



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpuSAqPee1s>

KID 1



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ry82TMPk7JE>

Comb



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4RhGqBSP4k>

LI 4



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

For Specific Issues

To promote cervical ripening

SP 6



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

To establish contractions

LI 4



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

Support people: Please note that each point can be stimulated for 1-2 minutes every ½ hour in early labour for: those having their first baby, those receiving a medical induction or a previous labour where there were issues with cervical ripening or establishing contractions.

For nausea

This point can be held or stimulated with a 'sea sickness' band

PC 6



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r1tFzdEGT7A>

If your baby is in a posterior position

Depending on access to the points BL 60 and SP 6 can be used by holding for a minute on each leg or one leg. BL 67 can be tapped for a minute with a fingernail or end of a pen to stimulate.

BL 60



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QC0ucLYpjF8>

SP 6



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

BL 67



Points useful to try in the transition stage of labour

KID 1



BL 60



LI 4



Support people: Please note that midwives report these points can reduce the fear and anxiety experienced as part of transition. KID 1 can also be used for fear or anxiety throughout any stage of labour and stimulated through wearing a sea sickness band with the button over the point.

To assist the baby to move down into the pelvis and to encourage effective pushing

GB 21



Support people: Please note midwives have reported this point can be useful for those having their first baby or first experience of the second stage of labour.

To encourage effective placental release after the baby has been born

GB 21



LI 4



BL 60



For 'after pains'

SP 6



To encourage let down

GB 21



Support people: Please note that while 'afterpains' that occur as breastfeeding commences may be mild for those having first baby, they can be stronger than the contractions experienced during labour for subsequent babies. The stimulation of GB 21 can be useful to encourage let down as the milk comes in (day 2-3), or earlier if women had difficulty with breastfeeding previously or have had a Caesarean section

Further information is 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/>