



Acupuncture During Pregnancy

Coordination between acupuncture sessions and consultation with your midwife or physician can prevent illness, harmonize pregnancy, and encourage healing, and help prepare you for birthing.

Benefits

- Subdue bouts of nausea
- Relieve pain and reduce stress
- Increase circulation to promote healing
- Improve lymphatic function
- Change breech presentation
- Natural preparation for birthing/induction

Effects of Acupuncture

- Reduces stress and negative emotions
- Calms and rebalances the mind and body
- Creates communication between the brain and central nervous system
- Encourages healthy growth and regulation of the fetus
- Increases endorphin secretions and neurotransmitters
- Promotes fertility, pre-conception, and prenatal health.

*The use of TCM for these areas of health goes back over 5,000 years in China.

NOTES

Food for Conception and Pregnancy

Ancient Chinese thinking says that the food that our parents ate prior to our conception and what our mothers ate while they were carrying us affects us throughout our lives. Likewise, what we eat will affect the health of our children throughout their lives. This is now being borne out by Western scientific research (Barker 1988).

Box 3.1 – Food Actions	
Yang <i>Warming</i> <i>Sweet or pungent</i> <i>Energising</i> <i>Ascending energy</i>	Yin <i>Cooling</i> <i>Salty, bitter or sour</i> <i>Building blood and fluids</i> <i>Descending energy</i>

Food cravings (the most common bring for salty or sweet food) are usually a sign of nutritional deficiencies. In other words, the diet is not properly balanced and may have been out of balance for many years. This should be remedied before conception and pregnancy.

Chinese dietary therapy suggests that pregnant women should eat according to their intuition and be guided by what their body is telling them. Vegetarians will often find themselves drawn to dairy foods, eggs,

What is Happening Each Month

If we look at the changes occurring trimester by trimester in fetus and mother, it is easier to see exactly what the nutritional requirements of both are.

First Trimester

During the first 3 months of pregnancy, all the organs of the baby’s body, as well as its hands, feet and limbs, are formed. It is a period of incredibly rapid growth spurts and in many ways, the most crucial stage of the baby’s development. Specific nutrients are needed – though it should never be forgotten that nutrients do not work in isolation but interact with each other in a complex synergy. If the body is given nutrients in the right combination, lower doses may suffice. That is why, although supplements have an important role to play in optimum nutrition, there is no substitute for fresh whole foods, which contain hundreds and thousand of health-promoting substances, some of which we probably don’t even know about yet.



Vitamin A

Vitamin A is vital for proper fetal growth and in particular the development of the eyes. It needs to work in balance with other nutrients, in particular zinc, B complex and vitamins C, D and E. It can be obtained from animal products in the form of retinol, or from vegetables in the form of β -Carotene, which the body changes with the help of zinc into proplasma vitamin A. (The long slow cooking of vegetables destroys β -Carotene, however.)

Vitamin A - Good Food Sources			
Fish oils	Egg yolk	Butter	Yogurt
Cheese	Carrots	Spinach	Apples
Broccoli	Tomatoes	Apricots	
Mangoes		Red Peppers	

B Vitamins

B vitamins should always be taken as B complex (in conjunction with other B vitamins), as their functions are linked, and dosing with one may lead to a deficiency of others. The body's need for all of them increases during pregnancy, and deficiencies have been linked with birth abnormalities such as cleft palate and shortened limbs.

Vitamin B - Good Food Sources			
Brewer's yeast		Green vegetables	
Egg yolk	Wholegrains	Wheatgerm	Rice
Legumes	Molasses	Bananas	
Papaya	Dried peaches	Prunes	

Vitamin C

Vitamin C helps to boost the immune system and increase the resistance to viruses and toxins. It is needed to make healthy collagen (the body's connective tissue), and it aids the absorption of iron and so prevents anaemia. Deficiency has been linked to miscarriage.

Vitamin C - Good Food Sources			
Citrus fruits		Black currants	
Melons	Pineapples	Bananas	Raspberries
Apples	Pears	Prunes	Tomatoes
Potatoes	Green peppers	Green vegetables	
Kale	Broccoli	Parsley	
Alfalfa	Rose hips	Brussel sprouts	

Vitamin E

Vitamin E is important in the development of the heart, to help get oxygen to cells and to protect RNA and DNA from damage that could cause congenital defects in the baby. It also helps the utilisation of fatty acids and selenium.

Vitamin E - Good Food Sources		
Unrefined cold-pressed oils	Green leafy vegetables	
Whole grains	Wheat germ	Nuts
Avocados	Molasses	Eggs

Iron

The volume of blood circulating round the body increases during pregnancy, to help get oxygen to the placenta. Iron is needed to make haemoglobin, the substance in the red blood cells that carries oxygen. Deficiency can lead to weakness, excessive tiredness, depression, headache, confusion and memory loss.

Iron - Good Food Sources		
Molasses	Whole grains	
Wheat germ	Lean red meat	Poultry
Almonds	Egg yolk	Avocados
Dried fruit: figs, currants and apricots		
Green leafy vegetables: spinach, broccoli, watercress, parsley		

Iron supplementation on its own is not effective, as it needs to work with other vitamins and minerals. Vitamin C in particular helps the body to absorb iron, as for example, taking a glass of fresh orange with an egg yolk.

Zinc

In addition to its role in preventing defects and low birth weight in the newborn, zinc is needed for cell division and growth, for maintaining hormone levels and to keep the immune system healthy. Zinc deficiency inhibits metabolism of vitamin A and may also be one of the causes of morning sickness. The best dietary sources are meat and poultry, so vegetarians are likely to be zinc deficient.



Zinc - Good Food Sources		
Meat	Poultry	Fish
Shellfish (particularly oysters)		Ginger
Sunflower	Sesame	Pumpkin seeds
Sprouted seeds		Almonds and other nuts
Soya beans	Fruit	Leafy vegetables
Watercress		Wheat + Oat germ
Whole grains		Brewer's yeast

*The citric acid in oranges increases zinc absorption

FOODS TO AVOID

These include saturated fats (from animal sources) which provide energy but should only be eaten in small quantities or in low fat forms, such as skimmed milk, lean meat and low-fat cheese. Processed foods tend to be high in saturated fat.

*Prevent morning sickness

Nausea during pregnancy may be a sign of deficiencies, and supplementation of certain B vitamins, folic acid and the relevant minerals will help in most cases.

Second Trimester

Approaching the middle of pregnancy, the change in a woman's shape is becoming more noticeable. The early feelings of nausea and tiredness should be passing and the appetite increasing, but the old adage about 'eating for two' is untrue. While it is vitally important to eat healthily, too much excess gain weight put on now will be difficult to shift later.

The baby is growing, its organs maturing, its bones hardening and its air passages developing.

Vitamin A

Vitamin A is needed for healthy eyes, hair, skin, teeth, mucous membranes and bone structure. It is linked to neural tube defects in still births.

B vitamins

The body has an increased need for B complex during times of stress, infection, pregnancy and lactation. They can also help to improve utilisation of other vitamins and minerals, with deficiency causing lowered absorption. In pregnancy, deficiency may lead to loss of appetite and vomiting, which can in turn, lead to low birth weight. B vitamins are needed for energy and the metabolism of carbohydrates and for the baby's developing nervous system. In particular, Vitamin B3 helps to form serotonin, an important neurotransmitter that helps with sleep and mood.

Vitamin C

The need for Vitamin C goes up in pregnancy. Vitamin C aids absorption of both iron and zinc, it helps carry oxygen to all the cells, it nourishes the baby, helps to fight infections and keeps the mother healthy. It also helps make collagen, the connective tissue that keeps skin supple, so it plays an important role in preventing stretch marks.

Vitamin D

Vitamin D is vital for healthy bones and teeth. It also aids the absorption of calcium and phosphorus. It is made in the skin in the presence of sunlight and is rarely deficient except in pregnant Asian women who produce less vitamin D.

Vitamin D - Good Food Sources	
Whole milk	Free range eggs
Fatty fish	Fish oil

Vitamin E

Vitamin E helps get oxygen to the cells and helps to keep skin supple.

Vitamin F (essential fatty acids or EFAs)

These form a large part of the membranes of all cells and give rise to prostaglandins, which are used to make adrenal and sex hormones and which affect all the body's systems. They help in the absorption of nutrients and activate many enzymes. EFA deficiency may be a contributory factor in pre-eclampsia.

Vitamin F - Good Food Sources		
Nuts	Linseed	Unrefined oils
Green leafy Vegetables		Sunflower seeds
Oily fish: herring, mackerel, tuna, sardines, salmon		

Calcium

A woman's requirement for calcium goes up more than three times during pregnancy. It is needed to form strong bones and teeth in the baby, to help muscle growth, and to control nerve and muscle function. Deficiency is associated with low birth weight and low scores on developmental tests. Premature babies are often found to have low levels.

Calcium - Good Food Sources		
Whole grains	Nuts	Carob
Dairy products		Dolomite
Green leafy vegetables		

