Ancient Secrets Course

For Better Bumps, Births & Babies

Guidebook for Stage 2: AcuBirth

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Your Acupuncturists, Chinese Herbalists & Eastern Birthing Mentors
Chinese Medicine in more depth:

Meridians
The twelve main meridians each nourish the foetus for one lunar month, in the order set out below. Sometimes disorders from those meridians will show up in a pregnant lady at that time but not always. It’s important to note that she may be healthy and not have any problems associated with that meridian. However, her health is usually more complex and so a number of meridian imbalances may be occurring causing the symptoms she is complaining of.

The names of the meridians will be familiar to you, however they have functions that encompass more than just their description in scientific terms. Their names have been capitalised to denote this difference, as they are in many Chinese medical texts.

In Chinese medicine, organs are three-dimensional. They have a meridian (energy channel) attached to them that runs on the surface of the body as well as internal connections to organs and other meridians. They have emotional and spiritual aspects as well as their physical aspects.

They form a complex web that is considered to be an information system, which communicates between your deeper organ systems (reproduction, respiration, digestion, hormonal etc), your emotional and spiritual body and the exterior world.

The functions listed for each meridian/organ are the cornerstone for understanding how they work and interact with each other in the body from a Chinese medical perspective.

Reference for image: http://www.israelth.com/english/?page_id=14
Four Weeks before Conception

HEART meridian

Passes through: The uterus via the Bao Mai (Uterus vessel).

Functions: Governs blood and blood vessels.

Houses the “Shen” (mind, emotions, spirit).

Opens to the tongue and manifests on the face and in the eyes.

Element: Fire

Partner: SMALL INTESTINE meridian (Yang) as Heart meridian is Yin.

Balanced meridian: Rosy cheeks, bright complexion, sparkle in the eye, harmony of mind and spirit.

Symptoms of imbalance: Pain along the course of the meridian, insomnia, profuse sweating, palpitations, tiredness, forgetfulness (short term memory), anxiety, depression, lack of sparkle in the eyes.

Diagnostic features: Diagonal line on ear lobe, straight line on bridge of nose, malar flush &/or grey complexion.

CONCEPTION – Yang becomes Yin – Menstruation ceases as the dance between the sperm and the egg form an embryo that attaches to the endometrium, where it will call home for the next ten lunar months.

First Lunar Month

LIVER meridian

Passes through: External genitalia, Liver, Gall Bladder, diaphragm, Lungs, pericardium, throat & curves around the Stomach.

Functions: Rules the free flowing of “Qi” (energy) ensuring a harmony of emotions, digestion, secretion of bile & harmony of menstruation.

Stores Blood.

Rules the muscles & tendons.

Opens to the eyes & manifests in the nails.

Provides the defences of the body.

Element: Wood

Partner: GALL BLADDER meridian (Yang) as Liver meridian is Yin.

Balanced meridian: A feeling that everything is flowing smoothly in your life and your health, harmoniously interacting with your environment and other people, a good digestive system.
with no problems, well-nourished tendons and muscles with good extension and flexion, good vision, strong nails, does not easily get sick, regular and harmonious menstruation.

**Symptoms of imbalance:** Pain along the course of the meridian, nausea, vomiting, pain in the subcostal region, headaches and migraines, visual disturbances, red and itchy eyes, moving aches and pains, bitter taste in the mouth, dysmenorrhea (painful periods), pre-menstrual tension (PMT), frequent sighing, anger, depression, frequent frustration, pent up emotions, muscular spasms, cramps and numbness.

**Diagnostic features:** Weak nails, two deep vertical lines between the eyebrows, green tinge to face, especially around the mouth, brownish marks, sometimes swelling around the eyes (not black).

**Liver related pregnancy symptoms:** Morning sickness, headaches, migraines, abdominal cramping, huge emotional rollercoaster, hypersensitivity, crying easily, angering easily, leg cramps, anaemia.

**Second Lunar Month**

**GALL BLADDER meridian**

**Passes through:** The ear, Liver and Gall Bladder.

**Functions:** Stores the bile.

Makes the decisions for the organs.

**Element:** **Wood**

**Partner:** LIVER meridian (Yin) as Gall Bladder is Yang.

**Balanced meridian:** Can make decisions easily and effectively and move on, have no problems digesting fat, have no problems with your ears, have a supple and flexible side-body.

**Symptoms of imbalance:** Pain along the course of the meridian, pain in the subcostal region, jaundice, bitter taste in the mouth, nausea, dizziness (vertigo), tinnitus (high pitched), fearfulness, indecision, sciatica, a very tight ilio-tibial tract (ITB).

**Diagnostic features:** Tight, raised shoulders.

**Gall Bladder related pregnancy symptoms:** Morning sickness, gluteal pain, hip pain, pain along the side of the body, shoulder tension, irritability, indecision.

**Third Lunar Month**

**PERICARDIUM meridian**

**Passes through:** No organs.

**Functions:** To protect the Heart by:

Helping the Heart to protect the “Shen” (mind, emotions, spirit).

Aiding digestion through its connection with the Stomach via its muscle-tendino channel (a calm stomach = a calm mind).

Is the aspect of one’s personality that’s “on show” to the world.
Element: Fire
Partner: TRIPLE ENERGISER meridian (Yang) as Pericardium is Yin.

Balanced meridian: Socialises easily, sleeps well, has no heart related problems, personal boundaries.

Symptoms of imbalance: Pain along the course of the meridian, anxiety, palpitations, heart burn, high blood pressure, pain in the sternum, angina, anxiety, insomnia, lack of sociability.

Diagnostic features: Red tip to the tongue.

Pericardium related pregnancy symptoms: Carpal tunnel syndrome, anxiety, depression, insomnia, palpitations, closing down to loved ones, or being too much of an 'over-sharer'.

Fourth Lunar Month
TRIPLE ENERGISER meridian

Passes through: The ear and diaphragm.
Functions: Transformation and movement of fluids.
Transformation and movement of "Qi" (energy).
Regulates the upper, middle and lower abdomen, ensuring the organs within each area communicate effectively between each other.

Element: Fire
Partner: PERICARDIUM meridian (Yin) as Triple Energiser is Yang

Balanced meridian: Well regulated body temperature, being warm and welcoming to others socially, no problems with swelling, professional boundaries.

Symptoms of imbalance: Pain along the course of the meridian, fluid problems, deafness, earache, shoulder, elbow or wrist pain, lack of physical or emotional warmth.

Diagnostic features: Over or under flexure of the elbow joint

Triple Energiser related pregnancy symptoms: Fatigue, Ankle oedema (though this is more commonly Kidney and Spleen related)

Fifth Lunar Month
SPLEEN meridian

Passes through: Spleen and tongue.
Functions: Rules transformation and transportation of "Qi" and fluid.
Rules the muscles (flesh) and limbs.
Governs Blood (bleeding disorders and manufacture of Blood).
Holds organs in their place in the body.
Opens to the mouth, manifests in the lips.
Element: Earth

Partner: STOMACH meridian (Yang) as Spleen is Yin.

Balanced meridian: Warm hands and feet, a good digestive system, lots of energy, a balanced mind.

Symptoms of imbalance: Pain along the course of the meridian, poor appetite, abdominal distension, diarrhoea, undigested food in the stool, belching and flatulence, heaviness of the body and/or limbs, fatigue, weakness, bruises easily, disorders involving prolapse such as haemorrhoids, duodenal ulcers, constant worry or anxiety, oedema – especially of the limbs.

Diagnostic features: Yellow, pale complexion, overweight, underweight, many horizontal lines on forehead, big hips, red or swollen tip of the nose.

Spleen related pregnancy symptoms: Loss of appetite, excessive or insufficient weight gain, fatigue, haemorrhoids, overly worried, over-thinking things, oedema, diarrhoea, bloating, reflux, anaemia, spotting.

Sixth Lunar Month
STOMACH meridian

Passes through: Spleen and Stomach.

Functions: The reception, ripening and rotting of food.

Initiating the transformation of food and water into "Qi".

The separation of "Qi" into pure and impure. The pure is sent to the Spleen and Lungs, the impure is sent to the Small Intestine for further separation.

Promotes the descending action of "Qi" through the digestive system.

Element: Earth

Partner: SPLEEN meridian (Yin) as the Stomach is Yang.

Balanced meridian: Good digestion, free-flow of new ideas.

Symptoms of imbalance: Pain along the course of the meridian, fixed ideas and obsessive thinking, nausea, digestive problems, bleeding gums, bad breath, reflux, diarrhoea, constipation, lethargy.

Diagnostic features: One deep vertical line between the eyebrows, dull yellow complexion.

Stomach related pregnancy symptoms: Reflux, nausea, constipation, fatigue, bad breath, sinusitis, vaginal thrush, excessive vaginal discharge.

Seventh Lunar Month
LUNG meridian

Passes through: Large Intestine, Lung, throat, bronchi and thyroid.
**Functions:**
Rules "Qi" and governs respiration.
Governed dispersing and descending of "Qi".
Regulates water channels.
Rules the exterior of the body – skin.
Opens to the nose, manifests in the body hair.

**Element:** Metal

**Partner:** LARGE INTESTINE meridian (Yang) as Lung is Yin.

**Balanced meridian:** Good respiratory system, good quality skin.

**Symptoms of imbalance:** Pain along the course of the meridian, difficulty in breathing, hay fever, sinusitis, cough, recurring colds and flus, asthma, skin disorders, excessive mucous, spontaneous sweating, excessive sadness.

**Diagnostic features:** Hair with no lustre, dry skin, excessive body hair, pale complexion, rounded or hunched shoulders.

**Lung related pregnancy symptoms:** Recurring colds and flus, shortness of breath, excess sweating.

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**Eighth Lunar Month**

**LARGE INTESTINE meridian**

**Passes through:** Lungs, Large Intestine and eye.

**Functions:** Receives waste that is sent from Small Intestine.
Removes water from the waste.
Expels solid waste.

**Element:** Metal

**Partner:** LUNG meridian (Yin) as Large Intestine is Yang.

**Balanced meridian:** Easy expulsion of stool, has a good balance when it comes to “letting go” emotionally and physically.

**Symptoms of imbalance:** Pain along the course of the meridian, lower abdominal pain, distended abdomen, constipation, diarrhoea, inability to express grief or excessive grief, difficulty with letting go generally or an inability to retain, shoulder pain, toothache (especially lower jaw).

**Diagnostic features:** Large sacs under eyes, full protruding lower lip, round shoulders.

**Large Intestine related pregnancy symptoms:** Sinusitis, frontal headaches, constipation.
Ninth Lunar Month

KIDNEY meridian

Passes through: Kidney, Bladder, Liver, Lung, Spleen, Pericardium and throat. Connects to the Uterus via the Uterus Channel (Bao Luo).

Functions: Stores “Jing” (a dense nutritive substance -something you are born with but can also be attained through living well and eating well).

Rules birth, growth, development and reproduction.
Rules the bones.
Rules water and fire.
Rules reception of “Qi” (in the form of breathing in for example).
Opens to the ears, manifests in the hair.

Element: Water

Partner: BLADDER meridian (Yang) as the Kidney is Yin

Balanced meridian: Developing appropriately for one’s age i.e. no problem at birth, no problem with growth milestones, functioning reproductive system, good bones, a healthy heart, easy inspiration, good hearing, quality hair – especially on the head.

Symptoms of imbalance: Pain along the course of the meridian, sore lower back and knees, oedema of the ankles, brittle bones and loss of teeth, lack of sexual drive, infertility, tinnitus, deafness, urinary problems, feeling of cold, desire to lie down and sleep, back pain when standing, fear.

Diagnostic features: Cold knees, black under the eyes, amount of hair growth, grey hair.

Kidney related pregnancy symptoms: Ankle oedema, lower back pain, knee pain, lethargy, fatigue, small for date babies, higher risk of genetic disorders, older mothers, hair loss, panic, breech babies.

Tenth Lunar Month

BLADDER meridian

Passes through: Kidney and Bladder, however links with all other organs via the “back – shu” points (points on the bladder channel down the sides of the spine).

Functions: Receives and excretes urine.
Relates to all other organs via the “back-shu” points.

Element: Water
Partner: KIDNEY meridian (Yin) as the Bladder is Yang.

Balanced meridian: A healthy back, no occipital headaches, no urination problems.

Symptoms of imbalance: Pain along the course of the meridian, lower back pain, back pain and spinal problems, sciatica, occipital headaches, haemorrhoids, spasms in calves, fear.

Diagnostic features: Dry red forehead, dry or cold skin on the back, especially along the spine.

Bladder related pregnancy symptoms: Lower back pain, occipital headaches, urination difficulties, sciatica, calf cramps.

**CHILDBIRTH** – Yin changes to Yang – The foetus has finished growing and is ready to be born. Lots of movement (Yang) begins to occur on a subtle level and before too long this movement becomes more intense, at which time a baby is born into the world.

**Eleventh Lunar Month**

**SMALL INTESTINE meridian**

Passes through: Heart, diaphragm, Stomach, Small Intestine and ear.

Functions: Assimilation and separation of pure and impure “Qi” and fluids. Transportation and transformation of “Qi” and fluids.

Element: Fire

Partner: HEART meridian (Yin) as the Small Intestine is Yang

Balanced meridian: Good digestion, no shoulder pain.

Symptoms of imbalance: Pain along the course of the meridian, abdominal pain, undigested food in stool, tinnitus, shoulder pain.

Diagnostic features: One deep line across forehead.

Small Intestine related pregnancy symptoms: Mastitis, breastfeeding problems (unrelated to baby), painful or difficult urination, or urinary tract infections, mouth ulcers.
Other meridians that have a major impact on pregnancy include two of the eight extra channels, Ren Mai and Chong Mai.

Ren Mai (Conception vessel, Directing vessel)

Passes through: The uterus

This vessel is closely related to the Uterus as well as the whole female reproductive system. All problems of the cervix, vagina and vulva are related to it. It is mainly involved with Yin, Essence (Jing) and fluids. Therefore it is responsible for all women’s physiological processes such as puberty, conception, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause. This vessel works best at nourishing the body and controlling “Qi”. The increased pigmentation along the midline of the body and around the nipples is said to be due to changes in this vessel during pregnancy.

Chong Mai (Penetrating vessel)

Passes through: The uterus

This vessel influences the supply and movement of Blood to the Uterus and controls menstruation in all its aspects. It is mainly involved with Blood and “Qi”. Due to where this vessel travels inside the body, it influences all areas of the body except the arms. During pregnancy it undergoes many changes. Since Blood is not lost every month with menstruation, there is a build up of Yin (more Blood and fluids are produced). It is said this build-up starts to transform into breast milk and gradually moves from the lower abdomen to the upper chest. Because of this change in direction of Blood and “Qi” flow, it can cause morning sickness (digestive energy going in the wrong direction), a feeling of heat in the upper chest and distension of the breasts. This vessel works best at moving stagnations of “Qi” and Blood.

The Uterus doesn’t have it’s own meridian.

It’s known as an ‘extraordinary organ’ used for childrearing and menstruating. The Conception Vessel, Governor Vessel and Chong Mai begin in the Uterus. The proper conditions for childbearing are dependant on sufficient Essence (Kidney essential Qi), free flowing Liver Qi and regulation of the Conception Vessel, Governor Vessel and Chong Mai.
Birth and Chinese medicine

Using Acupressure During Birth

Oxytocin is necessary for labour to continue flowing smoothly, and we are certain you have frequently seen what happens when a birthing mother becomes stressed or frightened. Often, her levels of adrenalin increase and levels of oxytocin decrease which in turn can lead the process to halt or become slow-moving.

The neocortex is the part of our brain that becomes activated under stress. Once activated, it becomes much harder for the mother to enter into a focused and relaxed space, as it works against the natural endorphins and hormones that keep labour moving along well.

The suppression of endorphins by adrenalin (from fear & stress) also impacts her experience of pain in labour, as endorphins are also our natural pain relievers. This all leads to a mother who has more painful and less effective contractions.

Acupressure is a tool that increases endorphins (the human body's natural pain relief), and through the power of human touch, helps the mother feel connected, loved and loving, thereby supporting the release of oxytocin.

We believe it is ultimately the midwife and birth worker together with the partner (or birth support person) who are most empowered to create a feeling of safety and confidence for the mother, that most strongly supports her through her labour.

Acupressure functions:

1) Induces calm and relaxation
   ➞ Decrease adrenalin, increase endorphins.
   ➞ Increase oxytocin levels.
   ➞ Regulate and encourage effective contractions.
   ➞ Enhance concentration and focus.

Naomi has observed many women who find their way from anxiety to calmness through using acupressure. It helps them relax their mind and body, helping them enter into a focused state, feeling supported and confident. Many women report that they thoroughly enjoyed the birth and don’t think they could have gotten through it without the acupressure.

2) Involves the partner – allowing women to feel more loved, supported and confident (thereby assisting oxytocin levels), and helps the partner to feel more connected to the birthing process.
Most women express that they really want their partner to be involved but are concerned that their partner seems under confident, and they don’t trust that they will know what to do.

Learning and practicing acupressure together before the birth allows it to be a fantastic tool to use throughout the process to continue engaging, and connecting with one another.

Practicing acupressure prior to the birth helps them develop the communication and trust, whilst discovering which kinds of points and pressure work best. This radically improves the sense of confidence in the birthing partner.

3) Regulates and encourages effective contractions – Naomi has witnessed countless times, even when there is extreme panic, that acupressure can still get strong contractions going!

Yin and Yang

As a pregnant woman approaches birth, her months and months of building up her Yin energy slowly starts to turn into Yang. Her body starts to make more movements in the form of uterine muscles contracting, she may feel warmer than usual and more movement from her in the form of walking for example will help to move her Qi into the process of labour.

For some women the change over from Yin to Yang can be very fast, especially in multiparous women. However for primiparous women, it can be much slower and often a more frustrating process.

Upwards and Downwards Movement of Qi

When a woman isn’t pregnant, it’s best if there is a balance between energy moving up and energy moving down so that that the result is neutral.

During pregnancy, it’s vital that more Qi is moving up to keep the foetus from “falling”, known more commonly as miscarriage.

During labour however, her Qi needs to be moving downward in a big way to help her birth her baby. There is a real need for her to be able to “let go” but this can be a challenging task, especially if she has been used to being in control.

All her meridians are involved in the process and must work together throughout her birthing marathon. During the birth, certain acupressure points are brilliant for reducing pain, establishing more effective contractions, helping turn posterior babies, stopping vomiting and much more. We’ll be going through these very soon.

What to Consider in the Lead Up?

In the lead up to birth, there are acupressure points we always suggest to help get her body ready for labour. They help to ripen her cervix, relax muscles and tendons, encourage her baby into the ultimate birthing position, calm her mind and start the flow of endorphins.
If she starts to go through these earlier with her partner, it helps to integrate the techniques more during birth and also helps her get in tune with her body earlier rather than later.

**Using Acupressure in the Lead up to Birth is Important because it:**
- Gets the mum used to finding the points.
- Gets her in touch with her body.
- Gets her and her hubby/partner communicating and focusing on her and her body and her birth.
- Gets those endorphins flowing.
- Gets her feeling grounded and connected to the earth - this is what she needs for birth.
- Gets her Qi flowing more smoothly so there is less obstruction and more opening.
- Gets her ready for her midwife or birth worker to use the points during her birth as her body and her mind will be in tune.

**What to consider during birth?**
- What she needs – does she want to be touched right now? Does she want pain relief (with acupressure) or is it more important to move baby from the posterior position, as this will then relieve the pain she's feeling? Do you need to stop vomiting?
- Your position – as birth can take a long time, it crucial for you to be using your body weight wherever possible and not compromising yourselves as midwives or birth attendants.
- Working with her in the positions she’s already in and not needing to move her.

**Stories from the birthing suite**
Naomi has been a birth attendant for over nine years, at the same time as practising Chinese medicine... so she has quite a few stories to share about how acupressure has worked.
Acupressure for Birth

Spleen-6 (SP-6) Inner ankle

This acupressure point is contraindicated up until week 36

**Location:** This point is located 3 cun (four of the woman's finger widths) directly superior to the tip of the medial malleolus on the posterior border of the tibia.

Slide your finger off the edge of the shinbone, towards the inside of the leg. It is useful to press on the tibia when first locating this point as pressing on this bone produces a very different sensation from the acupressure point.

**How to use it:** Direct pressure can be applied with a thumb or index finger to produce an intense, tender sensation, or a dull, achy feeling.

**This acupressure point helps the cervix to dilate efficiently and to regulate contractions.**

Women birthing their first baby or those who have experienced slow progression in a previous birth might like to use this point in early labour or pre-labour. Use at any point during the birth when you want to increase the regularity or effectiveness of contractions, e.g. to deliver a placenta, or if baby beginning to show signs of distress during second stage.

Apply firm acupressure on both ankles for three to five minutes. If using this to encourage contraction regularity, hold this point between contractions. If using this point to encourage contraction strength and effectiveness, use from just before the start of the contraction and hold during the length of the contraction.

After applying the acupressure to this point during labour many women report that their next contraction is quite different, often it feels much stronger or more intense.
Large Intestine-4 (LI-4) Fleshy thumb point

This acupressure point is to be used with caution during pregnancy

**Location:** Between the first and second metacarpal bones, on the radial aspect of the middle of the second metacarpal bone. It lies at the highest point in the fleshy mound formed when the thumb is brought to rest against the index finger.

**How to use it:** Use firm pressure with a thumb to produce an intense muscly sensation or a dull achy feeling. Acupressure to this point can provide general pain relief in labour, whilst enabling regular, strong and efficient contractions, assisting the progression of labour.

It is useful in pre-labour to try and get things moving, or if contractions are mild or irregular, or if labour slows down at any stage.

**This is a point that you can access in any position** - standing, squatting, lying and even in the bath. Often, she will reach for your hand for support, and you can hold her hand gently between contractions, and apply pressure to this point during the contractions. Or if you are trying to get things moving and there aren’t many contractions, apply pressure for several minutes, 3-5 minutes per hand on each side of the body.
Bladder-31 and Bladder-32 (BL-31 & BL-32) Back points

These acupressure points are to be used with caution during pregnancy

Location: These points are located over the first and second sacral foramen. The best way to locate them is to trace one of the woman’s index finger lengths from the top of the buttock crease and around one thumb width on either side of the spine. When you place your finger deeper into these points you can feel a small hollow. Please note, that if you are in the back dimples then you are too lateral.

How to use them: These points are fabulous during the birth for pain relief and to help keep labour moving along. Use thumbs or knuckles or sometimes she may prefer a flat hand to apply broad pressure across this whole area. Be mindful not to stop her from rocking or swaying, in fact you can also try and encourage some movement at some point to see if that may help her, if she isn’t doing it naturally. Simply allow your pressure to move with her. Remember to use your body weight to lean in to get good strong pressure. You can be leaning over her as she leans over, or is on all fours, or pressing against each other standing up.
Bladder-60 (BL-60) Outer ankle

This acupressure point is to be used with caution during pregnancy.

Location: In the depression midway between the tip of the lateral malleolus and the outer edge of the Achilles' tendon.

You can apply pressure to this point by bringing your hands around the back of the foot and gripping the woman’s ankles, applying firm pressure with your thumbs.

Please note: This point doesn’t produce the same kind of intensity with pressure that most of the other points give.

How to use it: This point is mostly used in the first stage of labour. It has a descending action and can be used to encourage the baby to descend and put pressure on the cervix to aid its thinning and dilation.

Its best use is for optimal positioning when a mother presents with an occipital posterior position. This point can be used daily if OP is detected late in the pregnancy (from 39 weeks) to encourage the baby into the best position. During the birth, this point can be used together with SP 6 to help turn the baby with a good contraction. Use SP 6 between contractions, and BL 60 during the contraction.
Gall Bladder 21 (GB-21) Shoulder point

This acupressure point is to be used with caution during pregnancy

Location: Midway between the spinous process of C7 and the tip of the acromion process, at the highest point of the trapezius muscle.

Draw an imaginary line between the bony prominence of the neck and the top of the shoulder joint. You can find this point midway along this line. It will feel tender with a numbing/buzzing/warming sensation (this sensation varies with individuals). The sensation is stronger on this point than any other along this line. You can find this point on yourself by bringing your hand diagonally across your chest and feeling with an index finger along the line.

How to use it: Pressure can be applied at the onset of each contraction, intensifying the pressure as the contraction peaks. If she is seated, you can stand behind her and use elbows for stronger pressure. This acupressure point has a descending action (useful to help the baby descend or further engage) and can stimulate uterine contractions. It is also very useful for helping the placenta come through (third stage of labour) and it stimulates the letdown reflex.

Many women tend to carry their stress in their shoulders and when they feel pain, it’s common for them to tense their shoulders up towards their ears. Using this point throughout contractions can be a gentle reminder for the mother to keep her shoulders down, whilst providing strong sensations to assist with pain relief. It is particularly good for the partner to use whilst the woman is pushing as it helps the descending action and helps her feel supported. By helping the shoulders relax, it enables the body to relax more and allows the oxytocin to keep flowing.
Kidney 1 (KD-1) Foot Point

Safe to use during pregnancy

**Location:** On the sole of the foot, between the second and third metatarsal bones at the crease made by toe flexion at the MTP joints. This point lies in the depression found in the top one third of the sole of the foot. It can be easily found by pulling the toes towards the sole of the foot.

![Kidney 1 Foot Point](image)

**How to use it:** You can use your thumb or knuckle, pushing inwards and upwards towards the big toe. If the woman is standing, you can also slide a small kids’ rubber ball to get good pressure on the point.

If you notice that the mother is getting [panicky or highly anxious](https://www.acubirth.com.au), think of using this point. It’s known to be incredibly [calming and relaxing](https://www.acubirth.com.au) and can be used throughout the pregnancy and all through the birth.
POINT COMBINATIONS

Induction, Slow Progression, Managing Medical Inductions
LI-4 (fleshy thumb), SP-6 (inner ankle), BL-31 & 32 (lower back), GB-21 (shoulder)

Acupressure is brilliant at helping things move along during the birth. The points below help you get into, or return to established labour with strong, effective and regular contractions.

**Pre-labour:**
Apply pressure to each of these points for 3-5 minutes on each side. You can do this regularly, though try and give the points some ‘breathing time’ so they don’t get too desensitised.

**If labour stops:**
Many women experience birth stopping or slowing suddenly upon arrival at hospital, or when they feel anxiety or fear. This is often due to her feeling less safe, so adrenalin kicks in and works against the hormone oxytocin that allows things to keep moving along. **Encourage her partner to help her feel safe again using some of the calming points first (PC-6 wrist point, KI-1 foot point),** and then try these induction points to help kick start the process again.
Prior to a medical induction:

**Overdue:** Use these points at least three times daily for 5 minutes per point on each side. You can hold each side at the same time. However, we strongly suggest the woman receives acupuncture as soon as possible, as this is a much stronger way of helping things move along.

**Medical reasons for induction:** We have found that most women treated at the Red Tent Health Centre with acupuncture prior to an early medical induction have gone straight into labour with the gel, rather than needing their waters broken or needing syntocin, and this enables an easier birth with less interventions, and less risk of interventions. For example, a woman with gestational diabetes that is deemed unsafe to get to full term should contact an acupuncturist and begin seeing them at least two weeks prior to the elected date for induction. We have found that whilst we may not be able to get her into labour early, we can set her up for a much easier medically induced birth.

During a medical induction:

Usually there will be some time between the application of the cervical gel/s, or once the waters have been broken, to give her body an opportunity to get into labour. During this time, use these points frequently.
Optimal Positioning - Managing Posterior Position
BL-60 (Outer ankle), BL-67 (Pinky toe), can add SP-6 (Inner ankle) during labour only

These points can really help turn things around – literally!

**During birth:** Encourage the woman to lean forward, and apply SP-6 (inner ankle) between contractions to encourage a strong contraction, and hold BL-60 (outer ankle) during contractions to encourage turning. If after a few contractions she hasn't noticed any change, try using BL-67 (pinky toe point, see below)

To use **BL67 (pinky toe point)** use a ballpoint pen and press the tip of it into the point and apply pressure for several minutes whilst she is leaning forward.

**Prior to birth:** From 39 weeks on, apply BL-60 (Outer Ankle) 3-5 min daily to the mother who is sitting over in a forward leaning position, or is kneeling on all fours.
Assisting Placenta Delivery

SP-6 (Inner ankle), GB-21 (Shoulder)

If there is some concern that the placenta is not coming soon enough, or if you want to try and give it an extra nudge, then use the following points. The shoulder point (GB-21) really helps to get the placenta to detach, descend and move through and the inner ankle point (SP-6) helps generate some effective contractions to dispel the placenta.
The extra acu-point many of you wanted to know about:

**High Blood Pressure, Cramps, Depression, Restless Legs**

_Liver-3 LR-3 (Top Foot)_

Any kind of **pain in Chinese medicine is considered as energy or blood not circulating well.** The Liver and Gall Bladder points help eliminate pain from the body by helping energy and blood to move more smoothly, thereby diminishing pain. This is obvious when dealing with cramps and restless legs.

**The Liver is also responsible for the free flow of Qi,** so when there is too much Liver Qi flowing upwards, which is more commonly known as high blood pressure. When there is a sinking of Liver Qi, this is seen as depression.

**Location:** This point is found between the first and second metatarsal on the dorsum of the foot in the hollow (1/2 cun) distal to the junction of the metatarsals.

**Used for:** Relaxing muscles and tendons, regulates the smooth flow of your body's physical, hormonal and emotional energy, it is also great for **relieving muscle cramps.**

**How to use it:** You will get the best pressure using your thumb. Press firmly into the hollow and keep it there for as long as is needed to diminish the headache.

This point when found correctly, will be tender. Use the sorest one to achieve the best result.
Current Research


Acupressure for 30 minutes when a nulliparas woman was 3-4 cm dilated on SP-6 reduced labour times, reduced the c-section rate and decreased labour pain. It was a single blind controlled trial with 60 women in each group. The results are statistically significant, compared with the control group who received a light touch at this point for 30 minutes.


Acupuncture patients underwent significantly fewer caesarean sections (7% versus 20%, p = 0.004).


Azam Hamidzadeh MSc, Farangis Shahpourian MSc, Roohangiz Jamshidi Orak PhD, Akram Sadat Montazeri MSc, Ahmad Khoosravi MSc, Effects of LI4 Acupressure on Labor Pain in the First Stage of Labor. *Journal of Midwifery & Women’s Health* Volume 57, Issue 2, pages 133–138, March/April 2012


Moriarty, Kathleen A., Ph.D., Psychophysiologic responses to acupressure used as a pre-birth treatment at full term gestation. *Dissertation, University Of Illinois At Chicago, Health Sciences Center*, 2007, 232 pages; 3274028
D J Stein, D J Birnbach, B I Danzer, M M Kuroda, A Grunbaum and D M Thys,
Acupressure versus intravenous metoclopramide to prevent nausea and vomiting during spinal anesthesia for cesarean section, Anesthesia & Analgesia February 1997 vol. 84 no. 2 342-345


Giovanni Maciocia, Obstetrics & Gynecology in Chinese Medicine, Churchill Livingston, NY, 1998


Labour (Induction / Acceleration And Pain Relief)

2. Chung UL et al 2003 Effects of LI4 and BL 67 acupressure on labor pain and uterine contractions in the first stage of labor J Nurs Res. 11(4):251-60
8. Scharf A Staboulidou I Gunter HH Wustemann M Sohn C 2003 Influence of antenatal acupuncture on cardiotocographic parameters and maternal circulation - a prospective study (German) Z Geburtshilfe Neonatol. 207(5):166-72
Tasks to complete before listening to the next call

Please submit your answers on the Acubirth for Midwives & Birthworkers Community on Facebook. You can change people’s names and other details to protect their identity. Naomi & Rebecca will get back to you on there: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Acubirth-for-Midwives-Birth-Workers/147274028671556?ref=hl

1. Find two MORE people to practice your acupressure techniques on (esp BL-32) and get feedback from them in regards to whether it feels irritating or deep and connected?
2. Was it easy or hard to find the point?
3. How did it feel for them?
4. What meridian is responsible for regulating the smooth flow of Qi?
5. For birth to progress, Qi must be flowing up or down?

Estimated time to complete: 45 minutes

Your Weekly Motivation Check In Questions

These are designed to keep you on track and motivated in the course. As you’re on the home study program, we ask that you do these for yourselves in between listening to each call to get the most out of everything. They will take you about 15 minutes. There’s no need to post these. You can keep a private record of them.

1. What you are grateful for in this moment? (focus on one thing)
2. What are you proud of accomplishing this week IN RELATION TO THE COURSE IF APPROPRIATE?
3. What are your top 3 intentions for next week? (this will help us keep you accountable)
4. What is the biggest thing you need support with right now IN RELATION TO THE COURSE IF APPROPRIATE? Something specific