

## SHIATSU FOR PREGNANCY AND CHILDBIRTH

Shiatsu is a traditional therapy from Japan, that is now becoming very popular in the West. Traditionally it was used as a home therapy within families, as well as being practiced professionally. In Britain today there are many qualified Shiatsu practitioners who are trained to treat a wide range of problems. Many people also learn some basic shiatsu for home use, for generally promoting health and reducing tension, as well as helping with many minor health problems. Shiatsu can be of great benefit during pregnancy and childbirth, and also with helping recovery afterwards, whether from a professional shiatsu therapist or from a partner or friend.

Shiatsu uses gentle but firm pressure with the palms, fingers and thumbs along the meridians (energy lines), and one particular points lying on the meridians, to create changes in a person's health. Shiatsu can be very helpful in pregnancy for relieving some of the common problems that arise, as well as for giving general support and relaxation to the mother. Shiatsu can be very effective for reducing back pain, using palming and pressure on certain points down the back, on the sacrum, and on meridians in the legs. Other common problems like constipation, heartburn and water retention are also often reduced, especially if some simple dietary measures are taken.

During the first three months of pregnancy care should be taken not to give shiatsu to certain points and parts of the body as they stimulate the uterus powerfully and could cause miscarriage at this time (these same points can be very useful during childbirth to stimulate the uterus to contract more strongly). Guidance on this should be sought from a qualified shiatsu teacher or from one of the books listed below.

Shiatsu can be wonderful in the first stage of labour to alleviate backpain, using pressure and rubbing techniques in the lower back and on the sacrum. It can also help if the contractions are slowing up or becoming weak. Stimulating the points that are contraindicated in early pregnancy can help increase the contractions again.

Traditionally in Japan after giving birth the mother was recommended to rest in bed for a week or two, to allow her body to recover from the enormous amount of energy used in giving birth, and for her body to heal. This also helps prevent postnatal depression, which can arise due to never getting over exhaustion following birth. Full body shiatsu can greatly help a mother regain her strength, as well as helping with problems like poor lactation. In fact once people have experienced the pleasure and health benefits of shiatsu, it can seem like a regular necessity, especially at times of greater need like during pregnancy and birth.

Further information and help can be got from Oliver Cowmeadow at the address below, or the following books.

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\*Shiatsu for Women by Ray Ridolfi & Suzanne Franzen published by Thorsons \*Shiatsu: A Practical Introduction by Oliver Cowmeadow published by Element