

Acupressure for Pain Relief in Labour

Optimising your bodies beneficial responses

My use of acupressure began in 1992 when, as an acupuncturist with a young child, I was unable to guarantee being available to attend labours. I instructed support people on how to stimulate the acupuncture points I would have used, thinking it might be useful. Surprisingly the feedback from women and midwives indicated acupressure had similar benefits to that of acupuncture and led to a free booklet being published online in 1996. Subsequently benefits continue to be reported. With research reporting acupressure reduced the incidence of caesarean sections.⁽¹⁾ Acupressure has also been reported to significantly reduce the need for epidurals and caesarean sections when used as part of a complimentary antenatal intervention.⁽²⁾

From feedback my 'top tip's for using these acupressure points in labour would be:

- Your support people do not need to be good at massage! They just need to follow your feedback to apply firm continuous pressure you find comfortable.
- Start using these points early in labour and experiment with which points you prefer
- The pressure and points you find the most useful are likely to change as you progress through labour
- You will notice beneficial effects during the contractions – if the pressure feels painful or irritating, they are not the right points for you at this time in your labour.

Below are links to short videos discussing point location. There are also suggestions for their use that come from my experiences, feedback from women and midwives using acupressure. Further information on using acupressure from 36 weeks as labour preparation, for assisting induction of labour as well as acustimulation techniques you can use on yourself can be found at <https://acupuncture.rhizome.net.nz/acupressure/>.

For Pain relief in labour

GB 21



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjuQadqgkY8>

BL 32



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

The Buttock Point



KID 1



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: a woman 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 women report these points totally changing their experience of transition. Midwives also report women becoming calm and focused when support people began using one of these points.

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 in a woman 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 afterpains that occur as breastfeeding commences may be mild when a woman has her 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 imagines <https://acupuncture.rhizome.net.nz/acupressure/>