A close-up photograph of a pregnant woman's midsection. She is wearing a light green, textured dress with a subtle floral pattern. Her hands are gently resting on her belly; the right hand is positioned higher, near the top of the frame, and the left hand is lower, near the bottom. Both hands have rings on the ring fingers. The background is plain white.

*The essential guide to using*  
**COMPLEMENTARY  
THERAPIES  
DURING  
PREGNANCY**

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*by* DENISE TIRAN

# USING COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES DURING PREGNANCY



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complementary therapies and Educational Director, Expectancy®  
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*An*  
INTRODUCTION TO  
COMPLEMENTARY  
THERAPIES FOR  
PREGNANCY

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## An Introduction to Complementary Therapies for Pregnancy & Childbirth

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Are you considering using complementary therapies during your pregnancy and for the birth of your baby? You may just want some “me time” by going for regular relaxation treatments, such as massage, aromatherapy or reflexology, or you may consult a practitioner such as an acupuncturist, homeopath or osteopath for relief of some of those discomforts in pregnancy. Perhaps you’re thinking of using natural remedies at home such as aromatherapy oils, herbal teas or homeopathic remedies? Maybe you want to prepare for a natural birth by practising “hypno-birthing” or taking remedies such as raspberry leaf tea?

Complementary therapies and natural remedies can be very beneficial during your pregnancy and particularly in labour. Research shows that over 80% of mums-to-be now use different natural ways to prepare for birth, and that having relaxation treatments regularly in late pregnancy helps your body to work efficiently. This makes it more likely that you will go into labour spontaneously without going too far overdue, and that your labour is more likely to progress normally without the need for interventions such as Caesarean section.

Many midwives now use complementary therapies when caring for you. Aromatherapy in particular has become a very popular addition to the services offered by many maternity units and birthing centres. Some midwives are trained in “hypno-birthing” or acupuncture, and in some units there are specialist services such as clinics for natural induction of labour or moxibustion for mums whose babies are breech (bottom-first).

However it is important to remember that just because these therapies are natural, they are not always appropriate or safe for all mums. If complementary therapies and natural remedies are powerful enough to bring positive effects to your pregnancy and labour, then it stands to reason that, if they are used inappropriately, then they also have the potential to cause problems for you or your baby. This particularly applies to remedies you may use at home, including aromatherapy oils and herbal and homeopathic remedies. If you have any medical condition or develop pregnancy problems you should not use any complementary therapies or take any natural remedies without advice from a suitably qualified midwife or therapist. Some therapies and natural remedies can interfere with your progress during labour so it is especially important to inform your midwife that you are using them.

Conversely, complementary therapists are increasingly specialising in maternity work, providing treatments in their independent practice. Further, some of these therapists wish to offer services which are more formally integrated within the conventional NHS maternity services, either through the provision of treatments ante- and postnatally or by accompanying women in labour. In addition, many mums employ the services of a doula, a lay birth supporter, and many use complementary therapies when caring for you during labour.

You will find information about specific complementary therapies on Expectancy’s website at [www.expectancy.co.uk/therapies](http://www.expectancy.co.uk/therapies)



*Coping with*  
SICKNESS

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## Coping with sickness in pregnancy

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Sickness affects up to 90% of mums-to-be. It may occur at any time of the day or night, be constant and may last much longer than the first three months. Being tired, hungry, anxious, prone to travel sickness or if you're expecting twins may make it worse. Heartburn, food cravings or aversions, excessive saliva or headaches often accompany the nausea. In a few mums the vomiting can become severe (hyperemesis gravidarum), which usually requires you to be admitted to hospital.

Here are a few suggestions to try at home. If these don't work you could see an acupuncturist, osteopath or homeopath. If your sickness persists, tell your midwife or doctor.

- **Eat foods you can tolerate** but avoid fried or fatty foods. Don't get too hungry - eat carbohydrate foods eg bread, crackers, potatoes, cereal or pasta to maintain your energy levels.
- **Get as much rest as possible** so you don't get over-tired - and consider taking time off work.
- **Try gentle exercise** such as yoga or pilates, or relaxation - listening to music or doing visualisation
- **Try a special DVD** or app ([www.morningwell.com](http://www.morningwell.com)) which uses a link between your ear's balancing mechanism and the vomiting centre in your brain. Pulsations, unheard under the music, cause sound

waves to bounce on your ears, acting on this balancing mechanism to reduce your nausea.

- **Wristbands** (Seabands™) – measure 3–4 fingers up from the crease on your inner wrist till you feel a slight indentation. Wear the bands on both wrists with the buttons over this point; press 20–30 times when you feel sick.
- **Ginger biscuits are not the answer** – use grated raw ginger to make a tea, or buy ginger capsules. In some mums ginger increases nausea or causes heartburn. Don't use it if you're taking blood thinning drugs, aspirin or tablets for high blood pressure.
- **Peppermint tea** may help, but avoid it if you have epilepsy or a heart condition, and don't use mint if you're taking homeopathic remedies as it can stop them working properly.
- **Camomile tea or slippery elm tablets** may also be of use but you should only take these on the advice of a qualified medical herbalist practitioner.

With **homeopathy**, you need to choose the remedy which most closely matches your symptoms. It's best to consult a qualified homeopath who can prescribe the most appropriate remedy for you.



*Coping with*  
BACKACHE

*Page 13*

## Coping with backache in pregnancy

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Pregnancy hormones relax joints, ligaments and muscles in the pelvic area, causing pain in your lower back; increasing breast size causes rib and upper backache. Sciatica, a sharp shooting pain down your legs, may accompany backache.

Here are some tips to help you. If these don't work, consult an osteopath, chiropractor, acupuncturist or reflexologist, or ask your midwife for a referral to a physiotherapist.

- **Stand straight and tall;** point your chin down to prevent your head tilting back. In bed, use pillows for support; keep your thighs parallel to prevent your top leg twisting across your body.
- **Get properly fitted for a maternity bra** so your breasts are supported by wide straps and adequately sized cups, avoiding extra strain on your shoulders and rib cage.
- **When driving,** sit tall, make yourself comfortable so your neck is not strained, then adjust your rear view mirror. Do this morning and evening as your posture changes during the day.
- **Avoid lifting where possible;** when shopping, balance two smaller bags in each hand, rather than carrying one larger bag. Never carry a toddler on one hip as this puts great strain on your back.

- **At work,** ask for an orthopaedic chair; keep both feet on the floor and don't cross your legs. If your work involves standing, shift from one foot to the other to ease aches, and sit down when you can.
- **Try gentle exercise** – walking and stretching – to relieve stiffness and pain. Swimming can help, but if you use breast stroke keep your face in the water so your neck and spine are straight.
- **When walking,** don't force yourself or you may strain ligaments further. Wear comfortable shoes with broad supporting heels.
- **Yoga, tai chi or relaxation classes** may help. If you exercise regularly be aware of how your body responds, adapt your techniques, sip plenty of water and don't get over-heated.
- **Massage** the painful area gently but avoid direct massage over areas of sciatica. A gentle back, neck and shoulders massage from a therapist can be very relaxing.
- **Aromatherapy essential oils** of ylang ylang or lavender can be added to your bath – 4 drops in a teaspoon of grapeseed oil and mixed well into the water.



*Coping with*  
CONSTIPATION

*Page 17*

## Coping with constipation

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Constipation is common in pregnancy because the hormone, progesterone, slows down intestinal movement.

Here are some tips to help you. If these don't work, consult a nutritional therapist, homeopath or reflexologist.

- **Don't eat a lot of bran** and bran foods unless you also at least double your intake of fluid; bran can also interfere with your body's ability to absorb vitamins and minerals from your food.
- **Drink at least two litres of water daily.** Start the day with boiled water and a slice of lemon. Avoid too much tea – 3 cups a day maximum – tannin reduces the gut movement and worsens constipation.
- **Fresh fruit and vegetables** – oranges, grapefruits, tangerines, blackcurrants, dried prunes, apricots, celery, watercress, cabbage, spinach, artichokes - and use plenty of garlic in cooking.

- **On the toilet**, breathe deeply, exhale, relax your pelvic floor muscles and try not to strain. Stand up with one knee bent and one foot on a stool or the edge of the bath. Ensure you won't be interrupted.
- **Reflexology** – for a simple technique, based on reflexology, ask someone to massage the arches of your feet in a clockwise movement, for about five minutes on each foot.





*Coping with*  
HAEMORRHOIDS

*Page 21*

## Coping with haemorrhoids

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Haemorrhoids (piles) are varicose veins in the rectum and anus. Hormones relax the veins, causing tenderness and itching. If there is any bleeding check that it's from the piles – if you're unsure, ask your midwife for advice.

The weight of your baby adds downwards pressure, sometimes causing piles to protrude outwards. If you've put on a lot of weight, are expecting twins or have had piles before, they may be worse.

Ask your doctor for a local anaesthetic gel to put round the anus just before you have your bowels open- this reduces the pain you may feel with the downwards pressure of the stool.

Here are some other tips to help you. If these don't work consult an acupuncturist or homeopath.

- **Avoid constipation** – see above. Avoid too much tea or milk, and reduce your consumption of refined carbohydrate foods such as sweets, chocolate, white bread and white rice.
- **The herbal remedy**, witch hazel, is a useful lotion to apply directly to piles that are visible, as it is anti-inflammatory and causes the veins to shrink slightly.

- **Aromatherapy oils** of cypress or frankincense, added to your bath, may also help - use 4 drops with a teaspoon of grapeseed oil and mixed well into the water; sit in the bath for at least 15 minutes.
- **Rescue remedy** cream, applied directly to the piles, may ease the discomfort.
- **Try homeopathic** pulsatilla 30C, one tablet 3–4 hourly for up to 5 days. Don't keep taking it and if this doesn't work, consult a qualified homeopath or ask in your local health food store.





*Coping with*  
HEARTBURN AND  
INDIGESTION

*Page 25*

## Coping with heartburn and indigestion

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The hormone, progesterone, relaxes the valve at the top of your stomach; acid surges up into your oesophagus (gullet) causing burning in your upper chest (heartburn) and indigestion after eating.

Heartburn may be worse if your baby is big or in the breech position or if you're expecting twins. Certain foods and smoking will also make things worse.

Your midwife can prescribe medicine to combat the acid reflux; this is safe enough in pregnancy, but excessive or prolonged use may interfere with your body's ability to absorb other minerals from your food, particularly with antacid medicines containing aluminium.

Here are some tips to help you. If these don't work, consult an osteopath, chiropractor or acupuncturist. Exercises which help with posture, such as yoga or pregnancy pilates, may also help.

- **Use several pillows** in bed to prop yourself up to avoid pressure on the valve at the top of the stomach. This does however sometimes prevent you from getting to sleep (see Insomnia, below).
- **Avoid foods which affect you**, eg; rich, spicy, fried, greasy foods, tea, coffee, alcohol, sugar. Eat small, frequent meals to prevent upwards pressure on the valve from a full stomach.

- **Eat raw garlic** each day, or take a good quality garlic capsule – make sure you buy capsules which are rich in allicin, the active ingredient.
- **Try sodium bicarbonate** (baking soda) - no more than quarter of a teaspoon dissolved in water but don't rely on it too heavily. Avoid it at mealtimes: it neutralises stomach acid necessary for digestion.
- **Herbal remedies** include camomile or dandelion root tea or slippery elm tablets Avoid dandelion if you are diabetic (including the temporary diabetes of pregnancy) - it interferes with blood sugar – or if you're on blood pressure medication.
- **Aromatherapy oils** – 4 drops of orange or neroli (orange blossom) with one drop of black pepper in a teaspoon of grapeseed oil - massaged over your chest and upper back, or added to your bath water.
- **Try homeopathic** pulsatilla 30C, one tablet 3-4 hourly for up to 5 days may help, especially if you are also suffering from haemorrhoids.



*Coping with*  
HEADACHES

*Page 29*

## Coping with Headaches in Pregnancy

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Headaches in early pregnancy are due to relaxation of the blood vessels in the brain by the hormone, progesterone. Tiredness, anxiety and stress, sickness or eyesight problems increase the frequency or severity.

Always report headaches in late pregnancy to your midwife, especially if they're at the front of your head and over your eyes: this may be a symptom of pre-eclampsia (pregnancy high blood pressure).

Ask your midwife which mild pain-relieving drugs are suitable; avoid taking too much paracetamol.

Here are some tips to help you. If these don't work, consult an osteopath or acupuncturist, or try Indian head massage. If your headaches are made worse through stress, try hypnotherapy.

- **Avoid chocolate**, cheese, coffee, tea, alcohol, cola and processed foods and drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration. Eat regularly to maintain your blood sugar levels.
- **Spend 10 minutes every day** doing something you *want* to do, not something you *have* to do. Rest in a cool room, soak in a warm (not hot) bath, or get some fresh air and gentle exercise.
- **Yoga, tai chi**, swimming or relaxation techniques such as deep breathing may help.

- **Slowly rotate your head** to one side as far as you can and return to the mid-line; repeat in the opposite direction. Lift your shoulders and push them down as far as possible from your ears; slowly lift and stretch one arm, circle forwards then backwards, lower and repeat with the other arm.
- **Aromatherapy oils** – put one drop each of lavender and peppermint oils neat, on the tips of your fingers and rub gently into your temples.
- **Peppermint tea** may also be effective especially if your headache causes nausea.
- **Try homeopathic aconite** – one 30C tablet 3 times daily for up to 5 days – if your headache develops suddenly, especially after a shock, is throbbing and is worse when you're cold or drink cold fluids.





*Coping with*  
INSOMNIA AND  
TIREDNESS

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## Coping with Insomnia and tiredness

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It's normal to be tired in pregnancy, but exhaustion may be worse by not being able to get to sleep, particularly in late pregnancy when you may have to get up during the night to empty your bladder.

It can be difficult to "switch off" when you go to bed, especially if you're worried or anxious. It won't help if you're physically uncomfortable – perhaps with backache, heartburn or painful breasts.

It is common also to experience vivid, sometimes unpleasant or worrying dreams, which are often related to subconscious worries about the birth or your baby.

You should only use sleeping tablets as a very last resort for a limited period of time – it's best to consult your doctor for tablets which are safe in pregnancy.

Here are some tips to help you. If these don't work, consult a therapist for relaxation treatments such as massage or reflexology, or a hypnotherapist if you're stressed or worried.

- **Develop a positive attitude.** The amount of sleep you need is individual. If you're getting less sleep than you would do normally, but are coping – why worry about it?
- **Take a nap in the daytime** if at all possible. Rationalise your housework to conserve

energy, or ask others to help.

- **If you're working**, at least try to move away from your desk at lunch-time, have something to eat and drink and perhaps take a walk in the fresh air. Can you take one day a week to work at home?
- **Establish a regular bedtime routine** with some relaxation. Avoid watching the news – listen to music or read a book. Try yoga or relaxation exercises, or take a walk around the garden.
- **Have a warm drink** but avoid coffee, tea, cola and chocolate, as well as cheese and wine, which are stimulants.
- **Keep your bedroom** warm and well ventilated. Avoid taking work into the bedroom; resolve any arguments with your partner if possible. Use earplugs and an eye mask if necessary.
- **Sex** – if you feel like it – is a good way of getting to sleep because the endorphins ("feel good" chemicals) which are released will relax you afterwards and make you sleepy.
- **If you have heartburn** use several pillows to sleep propped up and avoid reflux. If your

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back aches use pillows to support your legs, your “bump” and the small of your back.

- **Visualisation** (“counting sheep”) – imagine you are in a peaceful beautiful countryside or beach setting, or somewhere you have enjoyed which conjures up a feeling of tranquillity and joy for you; if all else fails try counting backwards from 1000!
- **Sigh Out Slowly** – focus on breathing out – start by giving a big “sigh of relief” then letting breathing in take care of itself
- **If you really can't sleep** in the middle of the night, don't panic: get up and have a drink, walk about or read and listen to music.
- **Camomile tea** can be useful but don't rely on it too much as it can make some people irritable; drinking more than one cup each evening can have the opposite effect and keep you awake.
- **Avoid herbal remedies** containing valerian or passiflora (passion flower) which can cause headaches, sickness, stomach upset, and a “hangover” feeling in the morning.

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- **Use aromatherapy oils** – 4 drops of lavender or ylang ylang in a teaspoon of grapeseed oil – in a warm bath. If you use a vaporiser or burner do not leave it on for more than 10 - 15 minutes.
  - **Massage is relaxing** – ask your partner to massage your back, neck and shoulders or feet. If you can afford it, regular massages throughout your pregnancy will relax you and aid sleep.
  - **Homeopathy** – if you're unable to “switch off” try one 30C tablet of coffea, if you have vivid dreams or if you wake up at the slightest noise, especially around 3 am.





*Information for mums-to-be*

AROMATHERAPY  
IN PREGNANCY  
AND LABOUR

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## Aromatherapy in pregnancy and labour

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Aromatherapy involves the use of highly concentrated pleasant-smelling plant oils. The oils also contain chemicals which give them different properties. Some oils are relaxing and help you to sleep, others are stimulating, increasing concentration and lifting your mood. Some oils contain pain-relieving chemicals, others affect your blood pressure and many help to fight infections.

Aromatherapy can be very beneficial during pregnancy, for relaxation and to ease discomforts such as backache, swollen ankles or carpal tunnel syndrome (wrist tingling). Research shows that having regular aromatherapy treatments towards the end of pregnancy helps your body to work more efficiently, increasing the chances that you will start labour naturally and have a normal labour and birth. In labour, aromatherapy can ease pain and aid contractions. Afterwards, it can help you recover from the birth, ease discomfort of stitches and help with breast feeding.

The most popular method of receiving aromatherapy is as a massage. The oils are absorbed via the skin into your bloodstream, passing to your internal organs and also crossing the placenta to your baby. Oils can be used in the bath, or as a compress, or inhaled. Whenever you smell the aromas, you are also inhaling chemicals from the oils, which pass from your lungs into your bloodstream, and also from your nostrils up the olfactory (smell) system to the mood centre in your brain, affecting your emotions.

### PRECAUTIONS

Aromatherapy oils are very powerful and work in exactly the same

way as drugs. Many should be avoided in pregnancy, labour or whilst breastfeeding; others can be used with caution in low doses. If you have any medical or pregnancy-related complications, particularly if you are taking any medication, or if you are expecting more than one baby, please ask for advice before using any aromatherapy oils.

Here are some tips if you wish to use essential oils at home

- Ensure that your oils are bought from a reputable health shop or online from a specialist aromatherapy supplier. They should be in small dark glass bottles and have an expiry date on them.
- Always dilute the oils in a carrier oil, eg grapeseed or sweet almond (unless you are allergic to almonds). Avoid baby oil as it is mineral-based which prevents the essential oils absorbing.
- In the bath, use just 3 – 4 drops of oil mixed in a small amount of carrier oil (or full-fat milk); for massage, use no more than 1 drop of essential oil in each 5ml (teaspoonful) of carrier oil.
- Essential oils should not be added to the bath or birthing pool during labour once your membranes (bag of waters) have ruptured to avoid any risks to your baby.

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- If you wish to vaporise oils to make the room smell nice, do not leave the burner / vaporiser on for more than 10 – 15 minutes in each hour, and never leave them on all night.
  - Aromatherapy oils should never be used for babies under the age of three months. Do not vaporise oils where your new baby or toddlers are sleeping.

### USEFUL OILS FOR PREGNANCY AND LABOUR

- Grapefruit, bergamot or sweet orange are gentle oils which can boost your mood and help relax you – but avoid these if you are allergic to citrus fruit
- Lavender is good for relaxation, helping you sleep and reducing blood pressure – but do not use it if you are on blood pressure medication or if you have an epidural in labour
- Frankincense is fantastic for calming you if you are very anxious and is especially good in the transition stage of labour, at the end of the first stage
- Black pepper is a brilliant pain-relieving oil and can be used for pregnancy aches and pains such as backache, and during labour – but it is quite strong-smelling so you may only want to use one drop

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### A WORD ABOUT CLARY SAGE

Clary sage is an extremely popular aromatherapy oil as it is thought to help with labour. However, it is very powerful and should be used with extreme caution. Clary sage should NEVER be used before your estimated due date as it can cause excessive Braxton Hicks contractions which may distress your baby or cause complications such as bleeding.

If you are overdue, clary sage may be useful to trigger labour but it is vital to use it appropriately. Never apply clary sage directly to your tummy and never use it neat. A maximum of two drops can be diluted in a teaspoonful of carrier oil and added to your bath water. It is important that you tell your midwife that you are using clary sage as it can sometimes make your contractions too strong.

Do not use clary sage if you have any pregnancy or medical complications, including a low-lying placenta or placenta praevia, high blood pressure, or a history of a very rapid labour in a previous pregnancy. Do not use clary sage oil at all if you have had a previous Caesarean within the last two years. Using too much clary sage oil or using it too frequently or too early can lead to fetal distress and excessively strong contractions. After your baby is born, avoid using clary sage if you have very heavy bleeding as it can make it worse.



*Information for mums-to-be*  
RASPBERRY LEAF TEA  
IN PREGNANCY

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## Raspberry Leaf Tea in Pregnancy

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Raspberry leaf is a traditional herbal remedy, often taken in pregnancy to prepare for the birth of the baby. Research suggests that chemicals in the leaves of the raspberry bush tone the smooth muscles of your uterus, helping your body to work more efficiently, possibly preventing you from going past your due date. However, raspberry leaf is not safe for all expectant mums. Taking too much may cause very strong contractions, causing your baby to become distressed. Ultimately, research suggests that taking too much may relax, rather than contract, the muscles of the uterus, therefore prolonging, rather than shortening, pregnancy and labour.

### PRECAUTIONS

If you have any of the following conditions it is wise to avoid taking raspberry leaf tea or tablets during pregnancy:

- Previous Caesarean within the last two years, or if you are due to have a Caesarean for a medical or pregnancy problem
- High blood pressure or pre-eclampsia, especially if you are taking blood pressure medication
- Premature labour in this or a previous pregnancy, or if you experience excessively strong Braxton Hicks contractions

- Previous very rapid labour (less than 3 hours)
- Placenta praevia or low-lying placenta, or unexplained vaginal bleeding in late pregnancy
- If you are expecting more than one baby
- If your baby is breech (bottom-first) or in any other position which is not head-down
- Medical conditions, particularly heart problems, epilepsy, blood clotting disorders, breast or ovarian cancer, endometriosis or fibroids, or if you are taking antidepressants



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## RASPBERRY LEAF TEA TO START LABOUR: A COMMON MISCONCEPTION

Many women believe that raspberry leaf can start labour if you are overdue and want to avoid a medical induction of labour. However, raspberry leaf should never be used to try to start labour. It is intended as a preparation for birth and should be taken in gradually increasing doses during the last three months of pregnancy. Raspberry leaf, taken in large quantities to start labour, may cause excessively strong contractions and fetal distress.

## SO... IF YOU WANT TO TAKE RASPBERRY LEAF DURING YOUR PREGNANCY, HOW SHOULD YOU TAKE IT?

Raspberry leaf tea, made from the dried leaves and boiling water, is thought to be more effective than tablets. The tablets usually come in 300mg or 400mg doses. Start with just one cup / tablet daily at about 32 weeks of pregnancy. Don't start any earlier than 30 weeks unless it's prescribed by a qualified medical herbalist. Allow your body time to get used to the effects for a few days, then increase the dose gradually every few days until you are taking 3 – 4 cups / tablets, spread throughout the day. If you experience strong Braxton Hicks contractions, reduce the amount to a level at which you feel more comfortable. After your baby's birth, raspberry leaf may help your uterus to return to its non-pregnant state. It may also help to combat infection, enhance

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your immune system and prevent anaemia as it provides essential vitamins and minerals such as iron.

*Remember: raspberry leaf contains powerful chemicals which act in exactly the same way as drugs – just because it is a natural remedy does not mean it is safe for everyone. Please inform your midwife if you take raspberry leaf tea or tablets during your pregnancy, especially if you develop any pregnancy or medical complications.*





*Information for mums-to-be*  
MOXIBUSTION TO  
TURN BREECH BABIES

*Page 51*

## Moxibustion to turn Breech Babies

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### WHAT IS A "BREECH" BABY?

"Breech" means that your baby settles in a bottom-first position instead of the more normal head-first position; after 35 weeks of pregnancy only about 3–4% of babies are breech. The doctor may offer external cephalic version (ECV) to try to turn your baby, or a Caesarean; you could also ask your midwife about having a vaginal breech birth.

### MOXIBUSTION

Moxibustion is a traditional Chinese technique to turn a breech baby to head first, usually around 34–36 weeks of pregnancy. Moxa - sticks of dried herb - are used to heat specific energy points on your little toes. The heat is absorbed into the points and transferred via energy channels, triggering hormone changes which relax the muscles in your uterus to allow extra "give", and increasing your baby's activity, encouraging him to turn. Research suggests moxibustion is about 66% successful, which is better than ECV. It's best to find a midwife who does moxibustion – a few maternity units now offer it, or search [www.expectancy.co.uk](http://www.expectancy.co.uk) to find a private practitioner, or you can visit an acupuncturist for treatment after 34 weeks of pregnancy

### HOW DO I DO MOXIBUSTION?

You can do this at home – but you'll need someone to help you. Check with your midwife that your baby is still breech and please tell her what you intend to do. Two types of moxa sticks

are available from Chinese medicine shops (paper-wrapped or charcoal-impregnated) – be sure to ask for moxa specifically to turn breech babies.

- Remove a centimetre of paper from one end of a moxa stick, then light it with a match; blow out the flame, leaving the stick smoking and hot
- Sit comfortably relaxed and loosen tight clothing; make sure you've emptied your bladder before you start
- The energy points are found on the outer corner at the base (cuticle) of your little (fifth) toe nails (see diagram on the next page)
- Ask your partner to direct heat from the stick over the energy points, about half a centimetre away from your skin: it should feel warm but not excessively hot.
- Move from one foot to the other, holding the stick for 15-30 seconds over the point on one foot, then to the point on the other foot; alternate between your two feet for at least 20-30 minutes per session

The treatment should be done twice a day, for 10 treatments (5 days). Complete the five days of treatment, even if you think your baby has turned

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## ARE THERE ANY REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TRY MOXIBUSTION?

Moxibustion is not appropriate for every mum with a breech baby. Whilst it is a gentle and generally safe technique, it should not be used if:

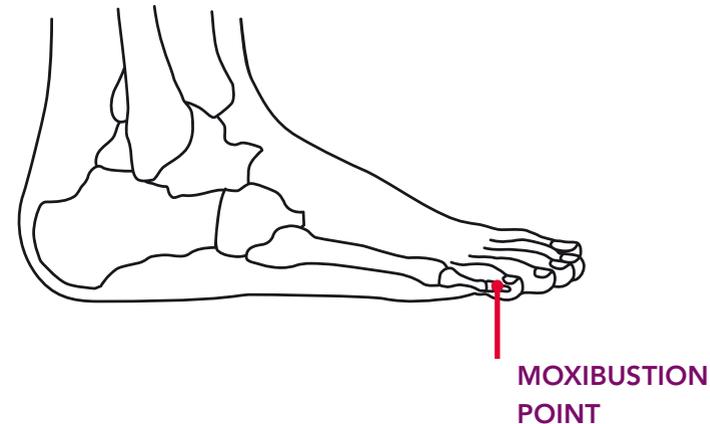
- Your doctor has said it is not appropriate for you to have ECV
- You have had a previous Caesarean or other uterine surgery
- You are expecting more than one baby or your baby is very big or very small or known to have health problems
- You've had vaginal bleeding, have a low-lying placenta or placenta praevia, or any other pregnancy complications
- You have high blood pressure, diabetes or any other medical condition, or if you're due to have a Caesarean for a medical reason
- Your baby keeps changing position, especially if there is a lot of fluid

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If you are Rhesus negative, ask your midwife if your Anti-D is up-to-date

Do not try any other way of turning your baby during the five days of the moxibustion treatment; do not continue the treatment beyond five days

If you are concerned at any time, stop the moxibustion and consult your midwife



***Please DO NOT attempt moxibustion without informing your midwife or doctor. You must be sure that your baby is still breech before you start the procedure.***



*About the author*  
DENISE TIRAN

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

### DENISE TIRAN MSc RM RGN ADM PGCEA

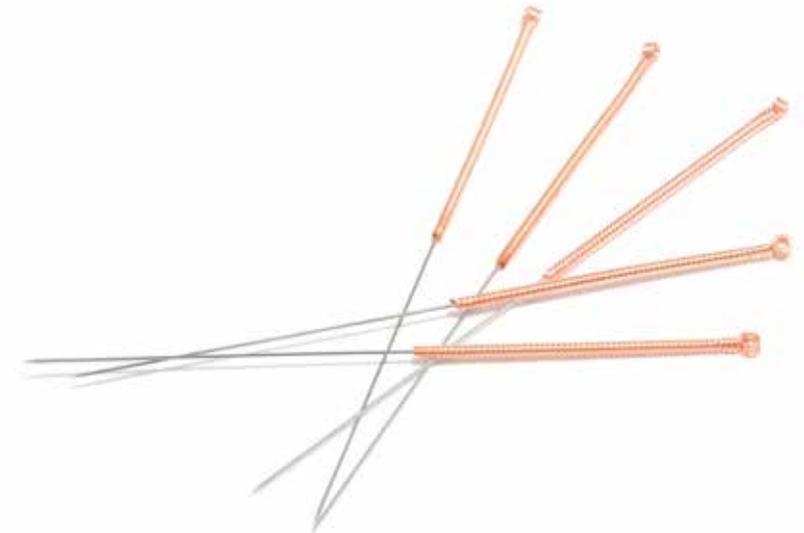
Denise Tiran is a midwife with over 35 years' experience and is proud to be considered an international authority on maternity complementary medicine. She's a university lecturer with a Master's degree in health research and author of many books on complementary therapies in pregnancy.

Denise trained as a nurse and midwife in London, then worked as a community midwife, helping mothers having home births. During the 1980's she became fascinated by the potential for using what was then considered "alternative" medicine. Over the next few years, she trained in several therapies, including reflexology, massage, aromatherapy and moxibustion and amassed a wealth of knowledge on herbal, homeopathic and Bach flower remedies and on Chinese medicine and acupuncture.

Whilst working at the University of Greenwich in the 1990's, Denise developed one of the UK's first degree programmes on complementary medicine, and established a specialist pregnancy complementary therapies clinic where she treated almost 6000 women. The clinic was "highly commended" in the 2001 Prince of Wales' Awards for Healthcare in London and often attracted professional observers from other maternity units and from overseas. Denise left full-time university work in 2004 to set up Expectancy in response to the growing interest amongst mums and midwives for using complementary therapies in pregnancy

and birth. Expectancy is now the leading provider of training courses for midwives and other maternity professionals on the safe use of complementary therapies in pregnancy and birth. In 2009 Expectancy achieved the Complementary and Alternative Medicine award for its contribution to professional education.

Denise has personally trained over 2000 midwives, therapists, antenatal teachers and birth supporters in the UK. She has taught professionals as far afield as Hong Kong, Japan, China, Malta, Iceland, Canada and Italy. She is a frequent conference speaker and an advisor to the Royal College of Midwives, the Federation of Antenatal Educators and Federation of Holistic Therapists.





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### A NOTE FROM DENISE...

Congratulations on your pregnancy. I'm passionate about helping you to have as natural a birth as possible, through the safe use of complementary therapies.

Pregnancy is usually a time of joy and anticipation, but often brings worries and physical discomforts too. Research has shown that complementary therapies reduce stress hormones and increase the "feel good" chemicals and pregnancy and birth hormones. You may consider complementary therapies for relaxation or to prepare for the birth of your baby. Perhaps you're looking for alternatives to drugs for those aches and pains such as backache, constipation or "morning sickness"? Or maybe you're looking for information about raspberry leaf tea, aromatherapy oils, turning a breech baby or what to do if you're overdue?

However, just because these therapies are natural, they're not safe for everyone. I'm dedicated to helping you find what's appropriate for you, with natural, safe ways to enjoy your pregnancy and prepare for your baby's birth. I hope you have found answers here or on my website to some of the questions you may have about complementary therapies and natural remedies in pregnancy.

Enjoy your pregnancy – and good luck!

*Denise Taran*

expectancy®

*The leading authority on maternity  
complementary medicine*

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