

# Osteopathy as therapy for pregnancy related pains

The gift of a baby is an exciting and joyful event for any mother-to-be, but pregnancy is often exhausting with some women suffering from aches and pains. Jodi Waugh shares how osteopathy can help relieve certain pregnancy-related symptoms and even prevent birth complications.



## Maternity & Baby Care

An upcoming birth can be a daunting prospect, especially for the first time. In Hong Kong, there are a variety of health professionals and therapies to help prepare you for a healthy, optimal childbirth, whichever birth plan you choose.

Osteopathy is one such therapy. An osteopath aims to restore the normal alignment of the mother's body and remove tension and patterns of restriction through a variety of subtle, hands-on techniques that include soft tissue manipulation and cranio-sacral work.

"Your body is made up of bones, joints, muscles and organs that are all inter-connected by a fascial network system of blood vessels and nerves," explains Jodi Waugh, an osteopath at the Integrated Medicine Institute (IMI). "When part of your body is restricted, you can see a ripple effect extending to other body parts."

Lower back pain is a common symptom with pregnancy but few people would connect that to an old ankle injury, gastro reflux and possible birth complications.

"Jeanne came to see me at 34 weeks with a lower back ache on the left side," says Waugh. "When assessing her posture, I noticed that she was unconsciously bending towards the left, cramping the space on the left side of her uterus."

Waugh's examination revealed a pattern of tension travelling up from Jeanne's left ankle to the attachment point of the hamstring muscle group on the sit bone in her left buttock. On questioning, Jeanne recalled spraining her ankle a year ago.

"Because she had been limping slightly, her left hip flexor muscle had shortened and was increasing the pain in her back when she tried to straighten up,"

explains the osteopath. "The associated tension in the left quadratus lumborum muscle was also restricting her lower rib cage, which in turn affected the stomach—a restriction that can bring about or make reflux symptoms worse."

"I spent two treatments articulating the joints in the left ankle and foot, and using soft tissue functional techniques to continue the release up the left leg into the left side of the pelvis, pelvic floor muscles, lower back, ribs and stomach," Waugh recounts.

After the first treatment, the osteopath asked Jeanne to stretch the piriformis muscles and do a gentle side stretch each day to help maintain the effects of the treatment. Jeanne's symptoms resolved completely after the second treatment. Additionally, this relieved the restrictions on the left side of her uterus, giving her baby—who had been positioned on the right side, feet down—more space on the left side, making it possible to turn headfirst as the due date approached. It was a happy ending for Jeanne, who was able to give birth naturally at 39 weeks to a healthy baby boy.

"I recommend expectant mothers to get an osteopathic check up in the lead up to the birth, particularly if you have suffered a severe fall or injury, and especially in the case of a heavy fall onto the sacrum or coccyx region" says Waugh.

"Whether you plan for a natural birth or a C-section, it's helpful if your body is not holding any unnecessary tension. Osteopathic treatments can prepare you to be in the best state of physical health and confidence to meet this exciting milestone."



### About Jodi Waugh

Jodi Waugh has a Human Biology degree and a Masters in Osteopathy (five years), along with several post-graduate courses in pelvic anatomy and osteopathic techniques in the obstetric and paediatric fields. She practices at IMI Central and Discovery Bay.

