**Homeopathic Remedies for Pregnancy**

Homeopathic medicine is considered "alternative" therapy in North America. Whereas in Europe, homeopathy is a mainstream medical tradition.

Pregnancy is a time when it is particularly appropriate to consider a homeopathic approach, because homeopathic remedies are dilutions, rather than concentrations, of various naturally occurring substances, mostly plants and minerals. In low potencies, they tend to work subtly and do not override the needs of your body or your baby. Working with low potencies, if we choose the "wrong" remedy, nothing happens.

The remedies are prepared by a process of dilution and secusion (vibration) and work by encouraging balance and the body's natural tendency to heal itself. It is said that homeopathy is more physics than chemistry, using the energetic rather than the chemical properties of a substance.

If you are going to take a homeopathic remedy, there are a few things you should know.

The remedies come as either clear liquid or on milk sugar pellets and have the best effect when absorbed through the mucous membranes. Holding 3-4 drops or 2-3 pellets of the remedy under the tongue for 15 to 30 seconds is best.

Because the remedies work subtly it is best if you do not touch the dropper or handle the pellets. (Remedies given to a newborn are best handled by the mother.) You should not eat or drink anything but water (and don't brush your teeth with toothpaste) for at least 15 minutes before and after taking a remedy.

Remedies tend to be somewhat neutralized by certain aromatic substances such as coffee, chamomile, mint, camphor and menthol, which are often found in cough drops, as well as by cannabis and cortisone, which generally suppress immune responses. So these substances should be avoided when making a homeopathic remedy.

In general, one decides on an appropriate remedy b y looking at the whole person and all of the symptoms that are present. The more accurate the picture you can give your caregiver, the easier it will be to find the right remedy. The best results are usually achieved by working with one remedy at a time. Acute situations, where clear symptoms have arisen recently, are the easiest for which to prescribe. This is often the case in pregnancy and labour. (Most often, you know if it's the right remedy after taking it 3-4 6times a day for three days. Although if you have had the symptoms for a long time, you may need to take a remedy for a longer time in order to see improvement.) In labour, a remedy can be used hourly and should have some effect in four to six hours. If you have a more long-standing complaint, your midwife may refer you to a homeopath who does constitutional prescribing. Unless you are working with a professional homeopath or naturopath, you are best to keep to potencies ranging from 6X to 30C. And if you are taking a constitutional remedy, consult with your homeopath before taking other remedies.

**Homeopathic Remedies for Specific Conditions**

**ARNICA 30C**
If you have one remedy on hand, let it be Arnica 30C. Arnica is the first of all first aid remedies ­- good for shock, bruising, swelling and tissue trauma. You may first use it in pregnancy if the baby has a favourite spot, perhaps a rib, to kick, and you're feeling bruised from the inside out, or if your pubic bone feels sore and swollen wheneber you walk. Arnica can even be used to help turn a baby in a transverse lie, especially if the abdomen is feeling too bruised to touch. Some women take Arnica hourly throughout labour and testify that it reduces pain in general although you may want to leave room to work with more specific remedies in labour, unless your predominant response in labour is feeling bruised and sore. We have found that Arnica is particularly helpful with vaginal swelling and bruising after birth and that, taken hourly, it may reduce the discomfort of after contractions. Always take the homeopathic preparation, not the herbal tincture.

**NAUSEA**Pulsatilla 30C is often helpful for nausea when a woman is emotional, but easily comforted. Key symptoms may be intolerance of warm rooms, improvement in open air and sensitivity to overeating rich foods. Sepia 30C may be helpful for the nauseous woman who is feeling ambivalent or critical and wants to be left alone. A common symptom is having the nausea intensify with the smell or even the thought of food. Ipecac 30C is worth trying if vomiting is severe. These remedies should be combined with sensible nutrition.

**URINARY TRACT INFECTION**Where the predominant symptom is extreme burning pain, Cantharis 30C with lots of water, alternated with unsweetened cranberry juice can head off a urinary tract infection and reduce the need for antibiotics. It can be taken as often as hourly if symptoms are severe. A prickling, itching sensation may indicate Urtica Urens 6C to 30C. Symptoms of urinary tract infection should also be reported to your midwife.

**VARICOSE VEINS OR HEMMORHOIDS**Both Hamamelis 6C to 30C and the homeopathic tissue salt Calc Flor 6X can help resolve varicosities. (Calc Flor is also helpful in preventing stretch marks.) Try the Hamamelis especially if the veins are painful and worse in the heat. Either remedy can be taken three or four times daily. (For topical application see section on Herbs for Pregnancy)

**COLD SORES**
Since many cold sore medications are contraindicated to pregnancy, it may be helpful to try the homeopathic tissue salt Nat Mur 6X or 6C.

**ANEMIA OR LOW HEMOGLOBIN**To promote iron absorption, especially with a low hemoglobin, Ferrum Phos 6X, the homeopathic tissue salt, may help you absorb and use all those good nutritional sources of iron. It can be taken three or four times daily.

**INSOMNIA**Two common remedies that may help with pregnancy insomnia are Pulsatilla 30C (see symptom picture under "nausea" above) and Colubrina 30C which often suits the woman who is driven to overwork, has difficulty slowing down in pregnancy, and may have difficulty cutting back on coffee. (This can also be a useful remedy for someone with drug or chemical sensitivities, depending on the symptom picture)

**SCIATICA OR CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME**Shooting nerve pains like sciatica as well as the numbness and tingling that can come with a compressed nerve pathway as in carpal tunnel syndrome, can often be helped by Hypericum 6C to 30C.

**BREECH BABIES OR OTHER MALPRESENTATIONS**If your baby is still breech at 32 weeks, take Pulsatilla 30C four times daily in combination with breech tilts, a position to encourage the baby to turn that your midwife will show you. If you think the baby has turned, stop the tilts and get your midwife to check, but continue with the remedy until the baby's head is securely engaged. Pulsatilla is also a good remedy to have on hand for backache in labour as it seems to encourage a baby to get in a good position. The tissue salt Kali Carb 6X or 6C and Gelsemium 30C are other remedies that are sometimes helpful for back labour. A homeopathic Materia Medica can help you determine which remedies best fit for your symptom picture.

**POSTDATES - OVERDUE BABY**If this is your first pregnancy, or if you were a week or more overdue in your previous pregnancy, or had a long difficult labour, you can take Caulophyllum 30C (from blue cohosh), but it is a good idea to wait until you have a noticeable increase in Braxton Hicks contractions or some pre-labour cramping or "false labour" before you begin. Taking Caulophyllum three or four times a day tends to help hormones get organized. It can also help calm down false labour that is keeping you from sleeping at night. Caulophyllum works subtly, so if you have clear symptoms, you don't want to wait until you are two weeks overdue before you begin. It can also be used in combination with 4000 mg of Evening Primrose oil daily.

**BREASTFEEDING**The other homeopathic remedy that everyone should have on hand for the postpartum period, along with Arnica 30C, is Phytolacca 6C. This remedy can help to resolve a breast infection or clear a blocked milk duct. If there is a red, tender or hard area on the breast, sometimes accompanied by fever, this remedy may be taken hourly, in combination with rest, plenty of fluids, and lots of nursing on the affected breast. It is also important to call your midwife if you have these symptoms.

**RESOURCES**Homeopathic Medicines for Pregnancy and Childbirth by Richard Moskowitz
Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicines by Stephen Cummings and Dana Ullman

**General References**Materia Medica with Repetory and Indian Drugs by Boericke
Repertory of the Homeopathic Materia Medica by J.T. Kent

**Professional References**Kent's Repertorium Generale by Kunzli
Synthetic Repertory by Barthel and Klunker