

Reflexology

how it can help women

By Claire Collins



The ancient healing art of reflexology has been known for thousands of years and was first practiced by the early Greek, Chinese and Egyptians. Reflexology is a complementary therapy that works on the principal that reflex areas in the feet and hands correspond to certain parts of the body.

It is a holistic approach, working towards bringing the body into a state of balance and encouraging the body's systems to work to their optimum.

Over the last decade in particular, there has been a significant increase and awareness in how reflexology can help women at all stages of their fertile life. Regular reflexology sessions can help in many situations, including painful and/or irregular menstrual cycles, difficulties in conceiving, problems during pregnancy and after the baby is born, and when menopause starts. Throughout each phase, reflexology can help with specific physical conditions, as well as supporting the woman emotionally by reducing anxiety or stress through deep relaxation.

Reflexology helping the menstrual cycle

Many women experience painful and/or irregular periods. Reflexology can be used to regulate or balance the body's hormones in order to establish a 28 day menstrual cycle and to treat symptoms such as stomach cramp, irritability, low mood and anxiety. Deep relaxation will help deal with pain and discomfort and bring about a feeling of well-being, which in turn will help women deal with their menstrual condition.

Reflexology helping women to conceive

Women who experience irregular period cycles or fail to menstruate may have trouble conceiving. Stress and anxiety caused by failing to conceive will affect the woman physically and mentally. Through reflexology, it is possible to help regulate menstrual cycles, stimulate the reproductive organs by boosting blood supply to these areas, eradicate toxins which inhibit fertility and reduce anxiety and stress levels. Diet, lifestyle, body weight, and reducing toxins such as nicotine, alcohol and caffeine, seeking help from the GP, treating the male partner and taking supplements should all be considered too.

Reflexology during pregnancy

Reflexology can be carried out safely throughout pregnancy, however, caution is advised in the first trimester where there is a history of miscarriage. Reflexology can help with conditions such as swollen feet, ankles and hands, back, pelvic and hip problems, nausea, poor sleeping patterns and stress and anxiety related to the birth. Reflexology during pregnancy is a very positive experience when combined with a good diet and specialist pregnancy yoga/breathing classes.

Regular reflexology treatments can help during labour - women who are feeling relaxed and mentally and physically prepared for the birth will have less painful contractions and less need for medical intervention.

Reflexology is used increasingly to help 'kick start' labour by using acupressure points combined with reflexology, this technique which should only be used once the due date is reached.

Reflexology after the birth

Once the baby is delivered, attention is naturally focused on the new born but in fact this is the time that the mother needs looking after too. Reflexology can help by re-balancing the hormones from pregnant to non-pregnant mode, stimulating the hormones needed for breast feeding, reducing any stress and anxiety which has arisen from the responsibility of looking after a baby, increasing energy levels and boosting the immune system which will help fight fatigue and illness and help bring a feeling of vitality and well being.

Reflexology and baby

Reflexology can be carried out on babies. The pressure used is very light and the time spent doing the treatment is much shorter (5 - 10 minutes maximum). Common baby conditions such as colic, colds and snuffles, teething and sleeping can all be helped.

Baby reflexology classes, developed to teach parent/carers how to do simple but effective reflexology, are scheduled to run in North Bristol from May onwards. Baby reflexology will help common baby conditions and increase the bond between parent and child. The classes will be run by Claire Collins and Sarah Lambert, reflexologists with 13 years combined experience. Both Claire and Sarah have their own children and experience of working and treating children. **To find out more about these classes go to www.this-little-piggy.co.uk.** ■



Claire Collins has a diploma in reflexology and specialist qualification in maternity reflexology. Claire is a member of the International Federation of Reflexologists (IFR) and works from the Chiron Centre in Westbury on Trym, Bristol.

If you would like to contact Claire with a query or make an appointment please visit her website: www.clairecollins-reflexology.co.uk or call: 0798 964 7775.