

## Homeopathy for the Childbirth Year

'The best midwife does nothing but catch the baby when the mother's body is ready to release it. The best homeopath does nothing but create the space within which a person remembers how to heal himself.'

Ian Watson (2004)

Birth is such a significant rite of passage in the life of both mother and baby, fathers too; from conception through pregnancy to becoming a new parent can be a time of huge emotional upheaval. Women face a plethora of decision making with potentially far reaching implications and the speed of life today is not conducive to minimising stress. We know that maintaining positive emotional wellbeing during pregnancy and the early parenting days provides the optimum environment for our babies to grow and develop, but life is often not so straightforward.

Homeopathy is a wonderful tool to access during the childbirth year, whether as a first aid measure in the home or constitutionally, under the guidance of a homeopath, to address deeper issues. I have always felt drawn to its precise yet subtle action, but more especially the way it supports human wellbeing so completely at an emotional, as well as physical, level.

### Different to herbal medicine

Often confused with herbalism, homeopathy is a completely *different system* of medicine. Only 60% of homeopathic remedies originate from plant sources, for example horse chestnut, red onion or cinnamon, where the flowers, leaves, root, bark or whole plant may be used. The remaining 40% derive from minerals such as sulphur or pure flint, animals such as snake venom or cuttlefish ink, and body tissue such as tuberculous lung. Remedies start out in the form of 'mother tincture', a solution made up from steeping the original substance - whether plant, powder or creature - in alcohol before straining. The solution then undergoes serial dilution with distilled water, including vigorous shaking between each dilution, a long process that gives the remedy its potency. Each drop of mother tincture may be diluted up to millions of times before it reaches the required potency and is finally applied to the small sucrose pillules, powders or tablets that are available on the pharmacy shelf.

The most extraordinary feature of homeopathy is that the higher the potency the more dilute the remedy - none of the original substance remains - yet the deeper it acts. Often it is enough to give just one

dose to bring about healing and cure. It is this aspect that continues to baffle science, at the same time, due to the specific nature of prescribing it is often inappropriate to research homeopathic medicine using traditional scientific methods. One theory on how homeopathy works - the one I like best - suggests that the *memory* of the molecules of the original substance is held indefinitely within the water. It is the 'vibration' of the remedy therefore, that works to rebalance the life force so that the body can heal itself. Indeed, homeopathic medicine is sensitive enough to be anti-doted by strong smells, even by touch.

### Painting the remedy picture

Every remedy has a 'picture' made up of keynotes which must match the symptoms of the patient as closely as possible, so as to treat 'like with like' and bring about healing. There are thousands of remedies to choose from, some with only subtle differences, meaning that not everyone will need to take the same remedy for the same complaint. Homeopathic treatment is therefore highly specific and individualised.

I do not therefore feel that listing particular remedies for particular complaints or conditions that may arise during pregnancy, birth and during the postnatal period is particularly useful, besides, it makes for rather dry reading. Instead I have outlined some specific cases where I have witnessed homeopathy help women and their babies through difficult times and from which I hope that readers may draw some parallel usage. I have noticed that an integral part of the homeopathic consultation often involves women voicing their anxieties or making a commitment to personal change in attitude or lifestyle. My feeling is that these intentions come every bit hand in hand with any effects the remedy may have, but it is the gentle support of homeopathy that helps with finding the confidence to carry them through.

'Vibrational medicine offers a way forward for individuals who want to take responsibility for their own health and life.'

Sylvie Lenoir (2007)

Katie came to see me at 36 weeks through her 4<sup>th</sup> pregnancy, her baby was lying in the breech position. She had one child, the two intermediary pregnancies having ended in miscarriage. She was still desperately grieving for the babies she had lost and although aware of the effect this might be having on the baby she was carrying, felt emotionally stuck and unable to move on. She very much wanted to clear the way for a gentle birth with her current baby, also aware of how her grief might block the birth process. We talked about ways of honouring the short lives of her lost babies and accepting their right to rest in peace, thereby opening the opportunity to give herself

permission to celebrate her current pregnancy. She went home with two doses of Pulsatilla (as a constitutional remedy) and the promise to spend some quiet time with herself and her unborn baby every day, gently working at resolving her grief and reassuring this baby that she was looking forward to his arrival. Her baby turned without the need for the second dose of Pulsatilla and Katie went on to enjoy a gentle fulfilling birth experience.

Pulsatilla has a reputation for being 'the' remedy for encouraging breech babies to turn, however, in my experience I have only witnessed such success when it has also been indicated as the mother's constitutional remedy.

Lucy came to see me at 41 weeks with her 4<sup>th</sup> baby. She was planning a homebirth and was adamant that she was not going into hospital to be induced as was being suggested by her consultant. She had however been experiencing strong Braxton Hicks throughout the day and felt that she was on the verge of going into labour. She was hoping that homeopathy might help the process along. As we talked I asked if there was anything she needed to say that might be holding her back. She admitted that she was feeling rather guilty because she already had 3 boys and was secretly hoping that this baby would be a girl, at the same time she did not want her baby to feel unwelcome. We explored the idea of sharing her concerns with her unborn baby openly and honestly, just as she had expressed them to me. Before she set off for home, committed to taking some quiet time out to do this, I gave her a dose of Caulophyllum. She went on to give birth to a 9lb daughter peacefully through the night at home.

It is a common myth that Caulophyllum is 'the' remedy to 'start off' labour. In Lucy's case her symptoms fitted the Caulophyllum picture so it worked well in supporting her to voice her concerns and let her body move on from hesitant into established labour. I have however witnessed many other cases of 'prolonged' pregnancy in the light of threatened induction where a completely different remedy has been required.

Two week old Joe was brought to me in desperation by his mother to relieve his colic. When they arrived Joe was sleeping so his mother told me a bit about her easy labour and his gentle birth. He awoke hungry but as she offered him her breast he began fighting and fussing, working himself into a terrible state, screaming angrily yet every time he took her nipple into his mouth he spat it out again. I encouraged her to take up any position she felt might help, and she tried lying down on the sofa but to no avail. I ineffectually attempted to soothe him myself with a cuddle and a bounce, but he was adamant. I felt

almost at a loss when Joe's mother got up and began pacing the room as she rocked him, and all of a sudden he fell quiet. The baby himself had shown me what he needed: 'symptoms better for rocking movement' is a keynote for the remedy Chamomilla. A few Chamomilla powders later, Joe no longer showed any symptoms of colic. Had he been drawing his legs up in pain however, and indicating some relief when laid stomach down over his mother's shoulder or knee - 'better from pressure applied to the affected part' - the remedy of choice would have been Colocynth. Again, an example of how no one remedy is appropriate for the same condition in two different people.

### Using homeopathy

Homeopathic remedies are available without prescription at most high street chemists or by mail order (see Remedies & Resources). They are safe to use at a low potency (6c or 30c) so long as you take only one tablet and wait. If the symptoms disappear, you do not need to repeat the dose unless they return, if they change you may need to move to a different remedy to clear them completely. Improvement can be drastically marked when the right remedy is applied, yet its action almost imperceptible, so much so that the remedy is often dismissed with incredulous disbelief:

'It couldn't have worked that quickly, could it?'

I love that! How can a medicine be so gentle and yet reach right to the root of the cause?

I feel that using homeopathy is one small way of contributing to detoxifying the earth. Rather than suppressing complaints with chemical preparations that so often cause unpleasant side effects, homeopathic medicine encourages the expression of symptoms so that they may be cleared out of our systems for good. Our minds and bodies therefore thrive and stay well. I feel it is as if homeopathy helps me fine-tune my whole self to be as conscious as I can be when supporting the women and families I work with.

So if nothing else, why not think of Arnica (for bruises, bumps and emotional shock) next time you give birth or when your toddler takes a tumble?

### **BOX text STARTS**

#### **Remedies and Resources**

Childbirth packs (as well as first aid and travel) are an economical and practical way of carrying homeopathic remedies with you, but only worthwhile if you use them regularly. You may find it simpler to start off with a few single 4g bottles of pillules such as the following four

remedies and one tincture:

Aconite 30c

Arnica 30c

Belladonna 30c

Pulsatilla 30c

Hypercal tincture (mother tincture)

All remedies and guide booklets (Material Medica) can be ordered from Helios Homeopathic Pharmacy [www.helios.co.uk](http://www.helios.co.uk) or 01892-536393(24hrs) /537254

**BOX text ENDS**

**References:**

Energy Medicine And Vibrational Healing An Interview with Sylvie Lenoir by Jane Thurnell-Read [www.healthandgoodness.com/Therapies/energy-vibrational-medicine.html](http://www.healthandgoodness.com/Therapies/energy-vibrational-medicine.html) accessed 20/07/07

Watson I (2004) *The Tao of Homeopathy* p86 Cutting Edge Publications: Kendal, Cumbria

**Books:**

Boericke W (2000) *New Manual of Homeopathic Materia Medica & Repertory* Jain Publishers Ltd: New Delhi

Buckley S (2005) *Gentle Birth, Gentle Mothering* One Moon Press: Brisbane, Australia

Moskowitz R (1992) *Homeopathic Medicine for Pregnancy and Birth* North Atlantic Books: Berkeley, California

Pinto G & Feldman M (2000) *Homeopathy for Children* CW Daniel Company Ltd: Saffron Walden

Odent M (2002) *Primal Health* Clairview Books: Forest Row, East Sussex

**Original article written by Adela Stockton for Juno Magazine Issue 13 Winter 2007 pp.42-44. Copyright Juno Magazine 2007.**