

Use of aromatherapy and acupressure for post-dates pregnancy: Post-dates Clinic

You have been given this leaflet to provide information on aromatherapy and acupressure and its use for post-dates pregnancy. If you have any further questions or concerns please speak to your midwife or doctor.

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You have been given this leaflet to provide information on aromatherapy and acupressure and its use to encourage the onset of your labour. If you have any further questions or concerns please speak to your midwife or doctor.

About acupressure and aromatherapy for post-dates pregnancy

This leaflet discusses three different techniques to encourage the onset of your labour:

- Membrane sweeping: an internal examination to stimulate the natural production of prostaglandins. Once you have given consent the examiner's fingers will locate your cervix, insert fingers into the cervix and sweep the membranes, separating them from the wall of the cervix.
- Aromatherapy: the use of oils with specific properties to stimulate uterine activity and promote a sense of relaxation. These are applied topically by massage using a grape seed oil base.
- Acupressure: a complementary therapy technique of applying pressure using fingers or thumbs along specific acupressure points that lie along meridian channels in the body. Acupuncture may promote a more favourable cervix within 24 hours.
- Aromatherapy is the use of oils with specific properties to stimulate uterine activity and promote a sense of relaxation applied topically by massage using a grape seed oil base.

It is important that you announce any allergies on arrival to the clinic.

Who is eligible to take part in Post-dates Clinic?

Your midwife will talk to you about whether you are able to take part in the pilot service offering acupressure and aromatherapy to women receiving antenatal care at the Royal

Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust; however,. However, suitability depends on the following criteria:

- First time mothers over 40 weeks of pregnancy, or mothers who have had babies before over 41 weeks.
- You are fit and well.
- There are no concerns for yourself or your baby.
- You have a normally situated placenta.
- Growth of your baby is within normal limits.
- No previous adverse reaction to aromatherapy oils.
- You have arranged an induction of labour with your usual community midwife.

What are the benefits of using complementary therapies?

Membrane sweeping encourages onset of labour; in addition to this evidence suggests that acupressure aids cervical 'ripening' (readiness of the cervix for labour) alongside the harnessing of the natural properties of selected oils to encourage and promote relaxation and stimulate contractions.

What are the potential risks?

The use of acupressure and aromatherapy is non-invasive, although most women express that acupressure points are tender. You may feel relaxed and sleepy after the appointment. For this reason it is suggested that you consider your transport after the appointment, and whether you feel alert enough to drive afterwards.

Due to the nature of aromatherapy oils please do not bring small children with you to the appointment, or friends in the earlier stages of pregnancy.

Membrane sweeping makes spontaneous labour more likely. It may not be possible to perform if the baby's head is too high, or the cervix is completely closed. It is often uncomfortable, and can lead to some short-term spotting. In rare circumstances your waters may accidentally break during the examination.

Are there any circumstances when complementary therapies should not be used?

The following is a list of contraindications for aromatherapy and acupressure treatment. Please consider if any of the following also apply to any persons you have brought with you for support, as passive exposure to the oils by others in the room with you cannot be avoided. It is preferred that you are alone with midwife for the acupressure and aromatherapy components of treatment.

- Epilepsy (complete contraindication)
- Severe asthma or respiratory disease.
- Known or suspected thrombosis (blood clot).

- Anticoagulation therapy.
- Previous caesarean birth.
- Previous adverse reaction to aromatherapy.
- Broken skin or sores at the points used for acupressure (ankle, hand and neck).
- Underlying medical conditions.

What happens at my Post-dates Clinic appointment?

On the day of your appointment you will be greeted by your midwife who will review your notes and ask you some questions to make sure you fit the criteria for our Post-dates Clinic. The appointment is anticipated to last 45 minutes and will include an antenatal check. To allow for administration tasks please arrive early for your appointment, and allow at least 15 minutes after appointment.

The midwife will ask you a series of assessment questions.

An antenatal check, including blood pressure, urine, a physical examination (palpation) and listening to your baby's heartbeat will be performed which will help us to ensure it is safe to proceed with the treatment.

You will be offered an internal vaginal examination including a stretch and membrane sweep. Some women do experience discomfort during this procedure and light blood spotting afterwards is not uncommon.

You will then be offered acupressure where pressure is applied using fingers, 20 intermittent presses will be applied to three points – to the spleen, to the large intestine and to the gallbladder. Most women find that following the acupressure the pressure points are initially tender.

Following acupressure, you will be offered a choice of aromatherapy oil blends with specific characteristics. These will be explained to you allowing you to choose the most suitable blend. You are welcome to smell the blends prior to application.

The oil of your choice will be applied to your feet or hands. If you prefer, the oil can be applied to your back although it may be difficult for you to achieve a position that will make this comfortable. The main aim is to deliver the oils to your body (clary sage, rose or jasmine will not be used for women who have had uterine surgery).

Following your appointment, you will be asked to be seated for a moment. Any feedback that you wish to provide during this time will be greatly appreciated.

Drink plenty of fluid as we recommend that you stay hydrated, relax for the rest of the day and avoid showering until the next morning.

Inform your midwife when:

- Your contractions have started.
- You experience continuous pain in your abdomen.
- You think your waters have broken.

Maternity information

- You have vaginal bleeding.
- If you have any concerns.
- You feel that baby's movements have reduced.

Contact information

If you have any concerns, worries or questions, please call 0118 322 7304 and speak to the triage midwife and she will be able to help you.

More information is available on the Trust website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

Author: Julie Hunter, Midwife (February 2019)

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