

# Introduction

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As an acupuncturist I have been promoting the use of acupressure for use during labour since 1992. At first I was somewhat sceptical as to just how effective it would be, but felt that acupressure would be at least be "helpful".

Initially, although pleased with the positive feedback I was receiving from couples (with women commenting on a reduction in the pain of contractions and feeling more in control during labour), as an acupuncturist I considered that acupuncture would be the preferred method of promoting pain relief during labour. It wasn't until I used acupressure during the birth of my second child that I understood just what the feedback I had been receiving really meant.

This was not a case of "that feels nice" or "I think this is useful" this was "come back and press here, now!" For myself, pressure on Ciliao BL-32 appeared to half the intensity of the contractions - so long as strong pressure with my partner's knuckles was applied. This effect lasted until early transition. The difference this made to my perception of labour was unmistakable, no acupressure and within 2 to 3 contractions the intensity had dramatically increased, direct acupressure and the intensity immediately diminished. I had experienced acupuncture during my first birth (ear acupuncture and acupuncture to Ciliao BL-32 followed by tens) and while at the time I thought it was useful, acupressure provided a dramatic reduction in my pain perception. Acupressure allowed me the advantage of unrestricted movement and the option of using water during the labour and became my preferred choice for the birth of my third child.

The continuing feedback I receive from midwives and couples has led me to believe that acupressure is capable of giving results that equal if not surpass the use of acupuncture as a tool for pain relief in labour. Women consistently report a reduction in their pain combined with an overall sense of calmness and a high level of satisfaction with their birth experience.

In 1995 I followed up of a sample of 74 women that I taught acupressure to over the period of a year, 88% percent of the women attempted to use acupressure. Of these women, 86% used it successfully in labour to significantly reduce their pain. 66% using terms such as "excellent" and "brilliant" to describe the effects. Of the four couples that also tried using a tens machine, three discontinued, preferring to resume using acupressure.

The acupressure points outlined in this booklet are easy to use, promote natural labour and encourage close partner involvement. It is my hope that in the future acupressure will be offered to women as part of their routine antenatal care.