



Post natal

Giving birth is a wonderful and rewarding experience but it is also physically demanding. It takes up to six weeks for your body to recover. Acupuncture helps to replenish and rebalance your body during this period. If post partum symptoms persist or develop after the initial recovery period, acupuncture is particularly effective in treating the following conditions:

- Insufficient breast milk production
- Depression
- Insomnia
- Mastitis or blocked milk ducts
- Pain

Breast feeding

Acupuncture is ideal if you are breastfeeding as it is non-invasive and drug-free. You can get your partner to apply acupressure to points to stimulate the let down reflex and help the flow of milk. These points are also located in an area where women often carry a lot of muscular tension and can be a pleasant way to help you relax during breast feeding.

<http://acupuncture.rhizome.net.nz/Acupressure/breastfeeding.aspx>

Tips for naturally optimizing your postnatal recovery

In Asian traditions women are expected to stay at home and rest for 30 days after having a baby. During this period they see only close family and friends who are expected to take care of mom and baby, prepare food and do housework (sounds great eh?) This is so mom can fully recover her energy (Qi/Chi) from the stress of labour and carrying the baby for nine months. The emphasis during this time is not on bed rest, but on eating replenishing foods, gentle activity, sleeping when the baby sleeps, and lots of kiss and cuddles with the new baby. You can make the transition to being a new mom easier by following these tips.

Before birth

In the weeks leading up to baby's arrival finish up any loose ends and tasks you have been postponing including:

- Maternity leave paper work
- Baby gear and supplies
- Cleaning and organizing your house
- Washing the baby clothes
- Making and freezing meals
- Organizing email/phone contacts for birth announcement
- Asking friends and family ahead of time to keep visits brief in the first few weeks

After baby is born

Ask for help. Most family and friends want to help but may not know what you need. Asking for help is hard to do as in North America we are used to being very independent. In many other cultures, however, is just expected that family and friends pitch in.

Get help from family and friends or hire someone to:

- Clean your house
- Prepare food
- Take baby for a while
- Get groceries
- Do laundry
- Take dogs for a walk

Ask professionals for help with:

- Breastfeeding issues
- Health concerns for you or baby
- Depression
- Sleep issues

Rest

Everyone will tell you---sleep when your baby sleeps. This is easier said than done! During the first few days it can be hard to sleep because you still have adrenaline coursing through your body. After that you may feel overwhelmed by all the household chores piling up. This is a great opportunity to learn to *Let Go*. Your dishes will wait for you, just sleep if you have the opportunity. It will help you recover faster and be a better mom!

Eat regular nourishing foods.

Your body is amazing; it supported a new life for nine months, and then overcame a physical task unlike any other, to give birth to your beautiful baby. Now, your body is producing milk and adjusting to new hormones, sleep deprivation, and new routines. In many cultures, including Asian cultures, it is expected that during the postpartum period women rest and bond with the baby; while her family takes care of all the other daily responsibilities primarily providing nourishing meals. Much of the recovery is due to nourishing foods that replenishes the woman's energy (Qi/Chi) and Xue (Blood).

Although we may not be so fortunate to have family and friends tend to all our needs for 100 days like in China, we can ensure that we are eating well. Below is a list of foods that will build your Qi and Xue (Energy and Blood) and promote healing and recovery:

- Oat porridge with dates
- Roast sweet potatoes, pumpkin and yams with rosemary
- Chicken stir fry with shitake mushrooms and rice
- Shepherds pie with beef mince, mushrooms, carrots and mashed potato as a topping
- Potato and egg salad
- Tuna fish pie made with hard boiled eggs and served with mashed potatoes and peas
- Stir fired Tofu, eggplant and mushrooms with sesame seeds on rice
- Home made muesli slice with honey and dates
- Rice porridge with Soy milk, apricots and almonds

- Dark leafy green salads with avocado and grated beetroot
- Warm chicken salad with artichoke and grapes
- Chicken mushroom casserole served with rice
- Scrambled Eggs with parsley
- Chicken, avocado and watercress sandwiches
- Mussel Chowder with calamari
- Kidney bean and mushroom lasagne with a spinach salad
- Any red meat dish.

(Note the maximum recommended intake of meat in traditional Chinese medicine is 2 –4 oz per serving, 3 –7 times a week).

In Chinese medicine cooking methods are also important considerations, as slowly or lightly cooked foods are seen as more nourishing and kinder to the digestive system. This is the difference between eating cooked oats in porridge rather than raw oats in muesli, or eating setamed cooked vegetables rather than a lettuce salad. This is also why soups (especially chicken), are considered so nourishing in those initial postnatal weeks.

Congee

A congee is traditional Chinese medicinal porridge made from rice or barley. It is seen as a powerful therapeutic food for strengthening digestion, boasting energy and aiding in the recovery from illness.

A basic congee can be made from using one cup of grain to 6- 9 cups of water or chicken stock.

- The amount of liquid you use will determine the thickness of the porridge, which can be thick like oat porridge or watery like a soup, depending on your preference.
- Polished rice is usually used, however sweet (glutinous rice) can be used to give a sweeter tasting congee

To prepare, simply rinse the rice thoroughly and place with the liquid in a crock-pot overnight (on low heat). Or simmer in a heavy pot on a low heat for 4-6 hrs, stirring frequently.

To this basic recipe any combination of Chinese red dates, black dates, cinnamon, cardamom, fresh ginger, chicken, pork or mushrooms can be added for flavour and medicinal properties. Suggestions include

- Use sweet glutinous rice cooked with apricots or black dates and a little cinnamon for a sweet warming Qi/Chi and Xue (Blood) tonifying congee

- Add fresh Shiitake mushrooms cooked with a little garlic to a plain cooked rice congee, topping with freshly chopped spring onion for a warming savoury Qi and Blood building congee
- Grind 25 grams of black sesame seeds, add to the uncooked rice and cook as a normal congee for a blood building congee
- Cook slices of chicken and ginger in a rice congee replacing the water with chicken stock and topping with spring onion for a variation on chicken soup.

Enjoy your postpartum bubble. You will be amazed how quickly your day will go, and you will relieve the only thing you did was stare at your beautiful baby.

Resources

Acupuncture and acupressure

Acubalance Wellness Centre www.acubalance.ca 604-678-8600

Postpartum Support

Mama Renew www.mamarenew.ca

Mary Chiasson M.A RCC www.lotuscounselling.com

Breastfeeding Consultant

Renee Hefti-Graham, IBC Lactation Consultant, 604.733.6359

Sleep Consultant

Cheeky Chops

Books

The Pregnancy Book – Dr. Sears

The Baby Book – Dr. Sears

The Vaccine Book – Dr. Sears

Research

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