Osteopathy Pregnancy and Childbirth

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Pregnancy and Childbirth is an unique and powerful experience. Enormous physical, hormonal and emotional changes take place over a relatively short period of time. The body has to adapt to carrying up to 20lb of baby, waters and placenta, which can impose physical strain on all the organs and tissues.

Osteopathic treatment during and after pregnancy can be beneficial in a number of ways:

• Easing some of the physical discomforts of pregnancy.

• Preparing for the demands of labour.

• Helping the mother to recover after birth.

Discomforts of Pregnancy

Osteopathy can help with:

Aches and pains are common during pregnancy, as the body changes shape to accommodate the increasing size and weight of the uterus. This involves considerable changes to posture. If the mother has existing back problems, or strains in her body from past accidents or trauma, it may be more difficult for her to accommodate these changes, and she may suffer more discomfort as a result.

The ligaments of the whole body soften during pregnancy due to the action of hormones. This allows the bones of the pelvis to separate slightly during the delivery to facilitate the passage of the baby's head through the pelvis. Unfortunately this softening affects the whole body and makes it more vulnerable to strain during the pregnancy.

Postural changes may cause backache, neckache, headaches, aching legs and undue fatigue. Osteopathic treatment can help the body adapt, and make the pregnancy much more comfortable.

Changes to the posture as the uterus expands is often accompanied by symptoms such as nausea, heartburn and shortness of breath.

Preparation for labour and position of the baby

As labour is likely to be more difficult if the baby is not lying correctly, it is worth trying to help them to move into a better position. The baby generally settles in a head downward position and facing backward with his spine curled in the same direction as his mother's spine. This puts the baby in the most advantageous position for passing through the birth canal during labour.

As the baby grows and takes up more space within the abdomen there is less space for them to move about, and they will find their own preferred position. The mother's posture has to adapt to accommodate the position of the baby, and if this conflicts with her own postural needs it may cause undue aches and pains. This is the reason that one pregnancy may be much more uncomfortable to carry than another.

POSTED BY

info@choicemedia.co.za

Address	
Contact Person	Administrator
Mobile Number	
Email	info@choicemedia.co.za

For more details, please visit http://www.connectingkidz.co.za/users/detail/administrator-1