

# Can Reflexology Help During Labor?

A 1988 study conducted by the Association of Reflexologists in London, England, showed that continual treatment during pregnancy reduced heartburn, hypertension, irritable uterus, and edema by 50 percent. In the study, reflexology was also used as an alternative to labor-stimulating drugs.

Many women undergo reflexology treatments to encourage labor, especially if they are overdue. Treatment can be used during any stage of labor, and reflexology's effects are felt as early as just two minutes into the therapy (with the full effect kicking in after just 15 minutes). Many reports, including "The Effects of Reflexology on Labor Outcome," by Dr. Gowri Motha and Dr. Jane McGrath, and Kirsten Sorrig's "Easier Births Using Reflexology," have found reflexology aids labor and offers positive effects.

During a typical labor reflexology session, pressure is applied to specific points on a woman's feet and hands to stimulate the pituitary gland and to induce the hormones known to speed labor and ease pain. The birthing woman is eased into a comfortable chair, fully clothed (except for her feet), and her feet rubbed with witch hazel. The labor reflexology session can last from 45 minutes to an hour. For hospitals that support reflexology treatment, these sessions can continue into full labor, with treatments occurring in 15 minutes intervals. (Husbands and partners can even be taught this treatment and perform it on their spouses during labor and post-partum.)

In the 1988 British study, first-time mothers between the ages of 20 and 25 who received reflexology had an average labor time of just five to six hours (with some labors only lasting two to three hours). Many women also didn't need anesthesia, and the placenta release was accelerated in 70 percent of women giving birth.

## Reflexology and Birthing:

Of 593 women who gave birth at Gentofte County Hospital (Great Britain) in 1988, 103 chose reflexology as an alternative to both pain killing drugs and to labor stimulating and inducing drugs. Of sixty-eight women who chose reflexology with no analgesic drugs, sixty one (89.71%) stated that reflexology had helped reduce pain., six (8.82%) felt no effect, and, one had increased pain in spite of reflexology treatment. Four of the sixty-one women who were helped by reflexology also required pain medication. Of forty-nine women who chose reflexology to stimulate labor, twenty-four gave birth without additional drug treatment. Fourteen women who were candidates for surgical delivery, received reflexology treatment between 30 and 60 minutes of birth. Eleven (78.57%) were then able to discharge the placenta. The other three had it surgically removed. All participants, except one, found the reflexology treatments extremely pleasant.

"Easier Births Using Reflexology." By Gabriella Bering Liisberg, "Tidsskrift for Jordemodre", No. 3, 1989. Thirty-seven of 64 pregnant women, who were offered free reflexology, completed the set course of ten treatments. The effects of reflexology on labor outcomes were perceived as outstanding. Some had labor times of only 2 hours, some 3 hours. The 20 - 25 year olds had an average time of First stage labor of 5 or 6 hours. The 26 - 30 year olds

seemed to have the longest labors. In total, the average first stage was 5 hours, second stage 16 minutes, and third stage 7 minutes. This is compared to textbook figures of 16 to 24 hours' first stage, and, 1 to 2 hour's second stage.

## Reflexology References:

"The Effects of Reflexology on Labour Outcome," Dr. Gowri Motha and Dr. Jane McGrath, Forest Gate, London, England

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Website: [http://www.pamperperiodical.co.uk/dec05\\_maternity\\_reflexology.htm](http://www.pamperperiodical.co.uk/dec05_maternity_reflexology.htm)