



# PREGNANCY AND THE BENEFITS OF REFLEXOLOGY

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As Reflexologists' we all know that Reflexology is a wonderful complementary therapy to use during pregnancy and labour. The many benefits are listed in the Irish Reflexologists' Institute Ltd. Leaflet entitled Reflexology in Pregnancy and Labour. I am so lucky and privileged to witness at first hand how this wonderful therapy can make pregnancy a really natural and enjoyable experience for the mum to be. There are many common ailments during pregnancy and some women experience some form of discomfort & fatigue, from the initial bouts of morning sickness to physical discomforts in the reproductive organs post delivery. Strong evidence shows that when the body processes function properly, pregnancy can be one of life's greatest joys. The list of potential ailments can be avoided or minimised by adequate treatment.

Studies already undertaken have shown that women receiving reflexology throughout pregnancy have a shorter and more comfortable labour.

As a word of caution however, care should be taken as always and as with all contraindications and generally as a rule of thumb not recommended in the first trimester and especially so if the pregnancy presents unstable or if the client has a history of miscarriage.

I'd like to share with you two of my clients' own personal stories and their view on reflexology in pregnancy. I'd like to express my gratitude to my clients for sharing their experiences

(Names have been changed for confidentiality) and the difference reflexology made to their pregnancies. It is often feedback like this that makes our job so enjoyable!!

## KERRY'S STORY

**Maternity Reflexology was such a Godsend for me during my pregnancy and I'm still reaping the rewards of it every day in my beautiful baby!**

When I first found out I was pregnant I was over the moon, it was all that I had wanted for a couple of years and when my wish was granted I was elated! It was also a time of uncertainty however as I had suffered for the past eleven years with chronic back pain sometimes even needing crutches to get around. I was always suffering with herniated discs and the pain was unbearable. Over the years I seen many doctors, chiropractors and even went to see a 'miracle' healer! I was sure that the pregnancy would weaken my back and my nine months of heaven would also bring me times of hell. Sure enough, as soon as I discovered the good news of the pregnancy I did my back in again, I had a herniated lumbar disc and the agony was unreal, I managed to drag myself into the doctor, resembling the hunchback of Notre Dame, he told me to get plenty of bed rest and prescribed me valium and panadol. There was no way I was taking valium while pregnant and was very wary about taking the panadol even! So I decided to go the complementary medicine route.

I also suffer from bad asthma and a year previously I had been in and out of the doctors with chest infections and they tried very hard to get my asthma under control. I ended up on a turbo inhaler which I seemed to be inhaling every hour of every day. I went to a reflexologist in my local area, Liz McDonald, to see if it would do any good, and to my complete

astonishment a session later my asthma had disappeared! Before I went for the reflexology I would literally have a panic attack if I didn't have my inhaler to hand and after the reflexology I didn't even need it! So in a way, my back problems quickly prompted me to see about reflexology for back pain. Looking back now, I feel that I was supposed to hurt my back again at that time to lead me to maternity reflexology! I went back to Liz, 'my reflexologist' and within about two weeks I was right as rain again. So I decided to have reflexology treatments throughout my entire pregnancy. I seen it as an investment into my health and into the health and wellbeing of my unborn child. The maternity reflexology was amazing, I can normally be an anxious person but I sailed through my whole pregnancy in such a calm and relaxed manner, I had no morning sickness, no haemorrhoids, no swelling of my ankles, I can't even think of any other annoying symptoms pregnancy brings because I simply didn't have any at all! I was absolutely spoiled rotten and I have no doubt in my mind whatsoever that it was the benefits of the reflexology. I never even had a twinge in my back either!

The treatments were like a little piece of heaven, so relaxing and so enjoyable. Sometimes Liz and I would chat and chat and other days I would just close my eyes and take in every little second of the treatment. Liz always seemed to know instinctively whether I wanted to chat or just simply be quiet as she worked her magic.





## Pregnancy continued

I was enjoying my little piece of heaven so much during the pregnancy but never in my wildest dreams would I learn that the treatments would play a massive part in my labour as my little girl decided to turn around in my womb two days before her due date. The hospital didn't want to risk a breached birth so they scheduled me in for a c-section two days later. The doctors were always very happy with my progress each time I seen them and I remember at one ante-natal appointment, the doctor commented on my haemoglobin levels, saying that he had never seen such excellent levels before. I didn't know much about haemoglobin levels but I smiled and felt like a good school girl who had just got an A on her homework! Little did I know how important the haemoglobin levels were going to be. During the c-section everything was going according to plan, my little baby Anna came into the world with a little cry and the sound of her made my whole body well up with pure happiness but then my uterus didn't contract like it's supposed to due to the size of my baby (9lb 6oz) and I was bleeding. I lost about two litres of blood. A midwife told me later that if my haemoglobin levels had been within just normal levels I would have needed a blood transfusion but because mine were so high I was alright. Yes you guessed it, reflexology came to the rescue! I'm again in no doubt that it was the treatments that raised my haemoglobin levels so much. My recovery was also amazing and the nurses and midwives couldn't get over how good I was the day after the section!

I had read that reflexology babies were little angels, who breastfed really well, slept well, didn't tend to suffer from colic and were generally really happy babies! Well, I have to say my little girl is a textbook reflexology baby! She is such a happy baby who spends all her time smiling, she didn't suffer from colic and even in the hospital the nurses couldn't believe how well she took to the breast. One midwife even commented that she was the best baby she had ever seen for breast feeding. So the treatments that I relished in back then are still benefiting me today and every wonderful day with my little angel!

## ELAINE'S STORY

I decided to try reflexology this time round on my 2nd pregnancy on a recommendation by my sister who swears by reflexology herself. I suffered with pre eclampsia and delivered early on my 1st pregnancy after feeling generally unwell for the most part. As you can imagine while I did so want another baby, I did not want a repeat of pre eclampsia if possible. Anyway I found Liz, a local reflexologist, after giving her a call in late December we decided to start the treatments straight after Christmas as I was due my baby the end of March. So, at 29 weeks gestation we started with the 1st treatment and I really did not know what to expect as I had never experienced reflexology before and knew very little about it. I need not have worried because following my first treatment I felt great, slept like a baby. One common condition of pregnancy can be constipation and I did suffer a little before my 1st treatment but afterwards any constipation I had was banished. On my previous pregnancy my problems started at about 32 weeks so I held my breath coming up to week 32 and ...nothing, no problems presented thank God. I enjoyed good health and my consultant reported that my blood pressure was normal and all was well with my baby. We continued with regular reflexology treatments for the remainder of the pregnancy with GP & hospital visits in between so we had proof that everything was going according to plan. On my last treatment at 39 weeks gestation Liz explained that she was going to use some extra reflex points to relax the uterus in readiness for labour. She wished me the best of luck for D Day and somehow she was fairly confident that I would deliver more or less on time, well I delivered bang on 40 weeks. I had a beautiful baby girl, she came into the world weighing a healthy 8 lb 3 oz and the picture of health. I would just like to add that I would definitely have no hesitation in recommending reflexology to anyone, pregnant or otherwise, it truly is a wonderful therapy, both relaxing and stimulating at the same time. Taking away everyday stresses while giving a boost of energy. I want to thank Liz for taking care of me & my baby, during my pregnancy she gave me comfort, energy & relaxation but most of all a pregnancy I

really enjoyed!!

● *I hope after reading this you will be encouraged to take on more pregnant clients. As the benefits when treating clients are so great as you can see from the above stories. I'd like to extend a special thank you too to Carol Donnelly of Suaimhneas Reflexology. I attended a couple of her fantastic workshops she facilitated, one of which was pregnancy & subfertility reflexology. This seminar and workshop covered the various stages of pregnancy: how a woman's body changes and baby develops, problems clients may have at these times and how reflexology can be of benefit. The theory and practice explained to me on this course gave me more confidence to treat clients while at the same time enjoy the whole experience fully.*

