

## Natural Pregnancy & Childbirth

Herbs have a long tradition of use throughout pregnancy and in childbirth, and much of our present day knowledge comes from a tradition of herbal midwifery. Many midwives and health-care professionals encourage the use of natural products to maintain optimum health during pregnancy and to facilitate an easier childbirth.

These guidelines are designed to give you a framework for using natural products during your pregnancy, childbirth and post-partum. They are not intended to form a sole reference for those seeking to enjoy holistic pregnancy and birth; rather they form the basis for discussion between parents, midwife and Medical Herbalist.

### **Herbs traditionally used include:**

#### **During Pregnancy**

##### **Internal Use:**

*Raspberry Leaf* – Raspberry leaf has a long tradition for use in pregnancy to strengthen and tone the tissue of the womb, assisting contractions during labour. Raspberry Leaf herb is taken as an infusion during the last trimester as follows:

**Week 28-32 – One cup daily**

**Weeks 32-36 – Two cups daily**

**Week 36 onwards – at least three cups** daily. At this time Squaw Vine can be combined with the Raspberry Leaf to enhance the properties of your herbal tea.

##### **External Use:**

*Wheatgerm oil* – Wheatgerm Oil is a rich natural source of Vitamin E and is used for its skin healing properties. Massage into the perineum once or twice daily throughout the last three months of pregnancy for best results.

**Essential Oils** – *Frankincense, Lavender* and *Mandarin* essential oils are often blended together to help the skin stretch without leaving any marks. For the best results they should be used daily throughout pregnancy.

#### **During Labour**

##### **Internal Use:**

During labour it is important to maintain energy levels, especially during the first stage, which can be long and tiring. Fresh plant juices or tinctures such as *Oats* or *Korean Ginseng* can be taken at this time to maintain stamina.

##### **External Use:**

During childbirth, gentle massage with essential oils can be comforting. These include *Clary sage, marjoram, geranium,* and *chamomile*. A herbalist might well recommend mixing all of those, and of course diluting them with suitable vegetable carrier oil for such massage.

## **Post-Partum**

*Marigold/wheatgerm and coconut oil* when mixed together provide a soothing healing breast balm, which will prevent your nipples from becoming cracked and sore.

*Chamomile* – possibly the most valuable herb for babies and nursing mothers. Internally chamomile helps to relieve colic and provide a restful sleep. Externally the oil of chamomile can be used to massage your baby and combines well with borage oil for this purpose. Can be used in a cream form on sore, cracked nipples.

*Calendula* - has both healing and antiseptic properties and is recommended by Homoeopaths and Herbalists as a healing agent for perineal tears. A tincture of Calendula can be diluted in water and use as a healing compress.

*Echinacea* - An important herb for the immune system improving our resistance to bacteria and infection. Nursing mums can take this herb and their babies will benefit from its action through the breast milk.

*Starflower oil* – the oil of starflower is very soothing and moisturizing to the skin. It is the herb of choice for dry skin and eczema.

*Fenugreek* - stimulates the production of breast milk. It combines well with *raspberry leaf, fennel* and *chamomile*, helping to prevent colic.

*Arnica* - Homoeopathic Arnica is well known for its use by women after their labour. Continue taking it for about a week after giving birth.

## **Nutrition**

Even with the most stringent dietary management the need for supplementation of a particular nutrient may arise. You should seek to use high quality supplements based on natural ingredients.

*Multivitamins:* Many vitamin companies produce balanced nutritional supplements to be taken during pregnancy. It is advisable to use a supplement of the highest quality from a reputable company. A pre-natal formula is highly recommended.

*Folic acid* – is essential for the division of body cells and is highly recommended during pregnancy.

*Iron* – non-constipating iron supplements are available. Ask your herbalist or our Dispensary assistants for advice

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