



# Mum's *the word*

Baby on board? Or planning for pregnancy?

**YogaLife's Cheryl Parsons rounds up Dubai's top natural therapies from HynoBirthing to Craniosacral Therapy...**

**G**wen Stefani went under the acupuncture needle, Jessica Alba swore by HynoBirthing and Nicole Kidman hailed the role of her doula; it seems that rarely a baby is born in Celebsville without reports of alternative support. Natural therapies have become big business and for many reasons, from alleviating morning sickness and easing backache to labour induction and pain relief. We take a look at what's on offer in Dubai in preparation for delivery day... »

# 1 { HypnoBirthing helps women deeply relax and let go of fear }

## HYPNOBIRTHING

### WHAT IS IT?

"I teach the Mongan Method of HypnoBirthing, a preparation for childbirth which helps women deeply relax, let go of fear and to connect with their natural birthing instincts," explains Dubai-based teacher, Jasmine Collin, who became a HypnoBirthing instructor after the birth of her daughter seven years ago. "I wanted to share the message that birth can be an empowering experience for a woman. HypnoBirthing can enable you to have a safe and comfortable birth while feeling calm, confident and in control."



Amelia and daughter Hermione Rose



Techniques include breathing, affirmations and visualisation

### HOW CAN IT HELP?

While the name HypnoBirthing might be confused with being in a trance-like state, the 'techniques' include breathing, affirmations, visualisation and deep relaxation. "Above all, it can change the way couples feel about birthing," Jasmine says. "It helps women trust the natural birthing process and remain in control whatever path their birthing takes, and leads to the need for less intervention, medication and a speedier recovery. It also prepares fathers for the process, helping them to feel more confident and involved in the whole experience." Jasmine runs classes where couples can learn the techniques and also how to write their birth plans and preferences. Home practice also plays a big role in the course so that HypnoBirthing becomes second nature ahead of delivery.

### AMELIA USED HYPNOBIRTHING FOR THE BIRTH OF HER DAUGHTER, HERMIONE ROSE:

“I would highly recommend HypnoBirthing – it helped to alleviate my fear of labour and **I was able to approach the whole experience with a positive frame of mind.** The techniques we learned helped me in my pregnancy, **and brought my husband and I closer together as it was something we could share.** It also helped me to connect with my baby before she was even born.”

# 2 { Reflexology helps promote healing and a sense of wellbeing }

## REFLEXOLOGY

### WHAT IS IT?

"It is a gentle, safe, non-invasive therapy that helps restore the body's natural balance, promote healing, relaxation and a sense of wellbeing," explains Gemma Nelson, a fertility and pregnancy reflexologist based at Purity Health in Dubai. "Reflexology is particularly beneficial for pregnancy, the postnatal period and even for those who are trying to conceive. During a treatment, pressure is applied to the reflex areas or pressure points on the feet and hands to help rebalance other areas of the body, such as the organs and hormone-producing glands."

### HOW CAN IT HELP?

Reflexology can help tackle a long list of pregnancy complaints from helping to balance hormonal and emotional changes to easing swollen feet and ankles, as well as morning sickness. "Many expectant mothers experience morning sickness and reflexology can really help to reduce nausea and vomiting," explains Gemma. "Constipation and heartburn are also common. The treatment can work on the

digestive area points to help relieve discomfort, while it also aids in easing an overactive bladder caused by pressure from the growing uterus." In addition, a series of reflexology treatments throughout pregnancy can help in preparation for the due date, with research showing that regular reflexology can help to reduce labour time and the need for pain medication. Specific oxytocin (often known as the 'love hormone') and energising points can be stimulated during labour, while a firmer pressure on these same points can help to induce labour.



### LISA HAD REGULAR REFLEXOLOGY TREATMENTS DURING HER PREGNANCY:

“After each session I felt calm, relaxed, sometimes sleepy but energised later on. It’s natural to feel tired during treatment and I’d often fallen asleep! Gemma explained that while in deep relaxation the body can help heal itself and rebalance. **I wouldn’t hesitate to recommend reflexology as it really is the most calming, relaxing and enjoyable treatment you could ever wish to have.**”



Pressure is applied to the reflex areas to help rebalance other areas of the body

WORDS: CHERYL PARSONS. IMAGES: SUPPLIED, SHUTTERSTOCK.



Acupuncture keeps our spirit, mind and emotions balanced



Sandy used acupuncture to encourage little Sam's arrival

### HOW CAN IT HELP?

Each treatment aims to clear blockages, balance and promote the free flow of Qi, to create equilibrium, health, and a sense of calm and wellbeing: "Scientific studies have shown that acupuncture stimulates the secretion of natural hormones in the body such as endorphins, that enable the expectant mother to tap into her own internal pharmacy to help promote physical and emotional healing," says Martine. "I treat a whole host of conditions in pregnancy, from nausea and vomiting, indigestion and constipation, to fatigue, anaemia, insomnia and fluid retention. Closer to the due date it can also help turn breech and posterior babies, as well as induce labour."

**SANDY USED ACUPUNCTURE PRIOR TO THE BIRTH OF HER BABY, SAM, AT 42 WEEKS:**

**"My due date came and went and we started to wonder when this baby was going to arrive! I didn't want to rush him and by 41 weeks I got in touch with Martine to find out if we could approach things holistically. We did four acupuncture sessions and Sam arrived at exactly 42 weeks. The treatments were non-invasive and relaxing and I'd recommend it to anyone! It helps to soften the cervix and prepare the body for a calm birth."**

## 3 { Acupuncture is one of the oldest medical practices in the world }

### ACUPUNCTURE

#### WHAT IS IT?

"Acupuncture is one of the oldest medical and preventative health practices in the world, originating in China more than 2,500 years ago. It is based on the principle that our health is governed by the body's motivating energy, known as Qi or Chi," explains Martine Nates, an acupuncture therapist at Dubai's The Koster Clinic. "Qi promotes blood circulation, warms the body, fights disease, controls organ function, and keeps our spirit, mind and emotions balanced. It flows throughout our body in channels beneath the skin, known as meridians, and can be accessed at specific anatomical points by either applying firm pressure with fingers or through the insertion of very fine acupuncture needles."



## 4 { Essential oils help to cope with the stresses of pregnancy }

### AROMATHERAPY

#### WHAT IS IT?

"Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils to help balance your body on a physical and emotional level," explains Irene Li, an aromatherapist who has lived in Dubai for seven years. "Pregnancy is an exciting time, but it can also be a time of physical and emotional upheaval. Aromatherapy can help you to cope with the stresses. One of the best ways to get the benefits of aromatherapy is through massage with a qualified therapist, using essential oils that are recommended for pregnancy and once a woman has passed four months. The aromatherapist should tailor the massage treatment for your specific pregnancy, as well as give advice on which oils are safe to use."

#### HOW CAN IT HELP?

An aromatherapy massage can give great relief to pregnancy discomforts, such as backache, heartburn, indigestion, insomnia, swelling and anxiety as well as helping to avoid stretch marks. "Some essential oils such as rosemary, juniper, myrrh and fennel shouldn't be used during pregnancy as they can raise blood pressure or induce menstruation," says Irene. "Others such as Roman chamomile, lavender, lemon and neroli are safe. They're also relaxing, uplifting and refreshing." Some of Irene's top aromatherapy treatments for pregnancy and labour include:

**MORNING SICKNESS:** Place 4-6 drops of spearmint in a bowl of boiled or cooled water by your bedside to calm a turbulent stomach. Peppermint and chamomile teas also aid digestion.

**BACKACHE:** Relax in a bath mixed with 1 drop each of Roman chamomile, sweet marjoram and lavender to ease pregnancy-related back pain.

**INSOMNIA:** Inhale 2 drops each of sandalwood and ylang ylang placed on a tissue to help promote a good night's sleep.

**DURING LABOUR:** Lavender, rose, ylang ylang and geranium can all be used in a vaporiser, while neroli is good if you are feeling anxious. Frankincense helps to relax and deepen your breathing during contractions.

## 5 { Craniosacral Therapy benefits both mother and child }

### CRANIOSACRAL THERAPY

#### WHAT IS IT?

"Biodynamic Craniosacral Therapy (BCST) is a holistic approach which involves light touch stimulation around areas such as a person's face, skull and spine," explains Susanne Reibin, a Dubai-based Craniosacral therapist, facial reflexologist and Reiki practitioner. "It is not only safe but recommended during pregnancy, as it calms the nervous system of both mother and child, encouraging emotional bonding which could be short-circuited due to prenatal and birth stresses. Also, although the growing baby is highly conscious, it doesn't know the difference between the mother's feelings and its own, so when Mum's system is soothed and balanced during pregnancy, the baby also benefits greatly. Physically, BCST influences the central nervous system, brain and spinal chord, as well as the surrounding cerebral spinal fluid, while emotionally and spiritually, it can open doors to both our hearts and souls, helping to promote a positive birthing experience."

#### HOW CAN IT HELP?

"BCST has been known to ease a host of physical or emotional problems, such as back pain, nausea, headaches, fluid retention, anxiety and stress," says Susanne. "It promotes deep relaxation that helps you to cope more easily with the day-to-day challenges you might face in your pregnancy and also to let go of past negative birth experiences or fears. This allows you to start afresh and trust in your body's natural ability to give birth." \*

*\*YogaLife and all the therapists who have kindly contributed to this article encourage you to obtain your midwife or doctor's consent before undertaking any of the natural therapies mentioned. Please seek your therapist's advice in case of any possible pregnancy contraindications.*

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