



# Prenatal Acupuncture 101

By Dr. Yana Symonenko, L.Ac.

**P**regnancy is a time of tremendous change—physically, emotionally, and energetically. For many expecting parents, acupuncture offers a safe and natural way to support the body through each stage of this transformation. Rooted in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), acupuncture promotes overall well-being and nurtures both mother and baby throughout pregnancy and beyond.

## What Is Acupuncture?

Traditional Chinese Medicine is one of the oldest continuously practiced healing systems in the world. It incorporates a variety of mind-body therapies, including acupuncture, moxibustion, herbal medicine, Tui Na, nutritional therapy, Tai Chi, and Qi Gong, to treat or prevent illness while enhancing overall quality of life.

Acupuncture is based on the principle that all living beings have Qi, the vital energy that sustains life. When the flow of Qi becomes disrupted or imbalanced, physical and emotional symptoms may arise.

Acupuncture therapy works to rebalance this flow by gently inserting sterile, single-use, hair-thin needles into the skin at specific points on the body known as acupoints. Once the needles are placed, the patient rests for twenty to thirty minutes while Qi circulates through the organs and meridians, allowing the body's regulatory systems to respond and restore internal harmony.

From a biomedical perspective, acupuncture has been shown to influence the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems by modulating neurotransmitters, reducing inflammation, and improving circulation. With a growing body of evidence-based research, acupuncture has gained increasing recognition in the fields of fertility and pregnancy for its ability to support hormonal balance, reduce stress, and alleviate common pregnancy-related discomforts. When thoughtfully integrated with conventional prenatal care, acupuncture can enhance overall well-being for both mother and baby.

## How Is Acupuncture Used During Pregnancy, and Is It Safe?

Yes, acupuncture is safe during pregnancy and has been shown to be both beneficial and effective when provided by a licensed practitioner.

During the first trimester, treatments focus on supporting the pregnancy, nourishing the body, and easing early symptoms such as fatigue, morning sickness, and heartburn.

In the second trimester, care is directed toward maintaining healthy weight gain, reducing edema, supporting balanced blood pressure, addressing skin imbalances, and helping prevent hemorrhoids.

In the third trimester, regular acupuncture treatments can significantly reduce common pregnancy-related discomforts such as

musculoskeletal pain, bladder issues, headaches, constipation, and ankle swelling.

Throughout all stages of pregnancy, acupuncture also supports emotional well-being and helps prepare the body for a smoother labor and postpartum recovery.

### **What Are the Main Benefits of Prenatal Acupuncture?**

Some of the most common complaints during pregnancy include morning sickness, insomnia, pain, swelling, emotional fluctuations, hypertension, indigestion, constipation, and diarrhea.

Regular acupuncture treatments can help reduce the severity and frequency of these symptoms, supporting a more comfortable pregnancy overall. Prenatal acupuncture has also been shown to regulate the nervous and endocrine systems, reduce stress-related physiological responses, and improve overall maternal well-being. These benefits may contribute to increased energy levels, improved sleep quality, better nutrient absorption, enhanced physical comfort, and greater enjoyment of intimacy with your partner. Acupuncture may also help shorten labor duration and foster greater confidence in the body's ability to give birth with minimal medical or pharmaceutical intervention when appropriate.

### **What Are the Main Benefits of Postnatal Acupuncture?**

Some of the most common complaints during the postpartum period include anxiety, fatigue, depression, pelvic and low-back pain, and poor milk supply.

Postnatal acupuncture can support recovery by helping regulate reproductive and stress-related hormones, reduce inflammation, and promote circulation to tissues affected by pregnancy, labor, and delivery. For individuals experiencing low or inconsistent milk supply, acupuncture, often combined with carefully selected nourishing herbs, may help support lactation by improving circulation and enhancing hormonal signaling involved in milk production.

Regular treatments can also help relieve postpartum anxiety and fatigue, promote better sleep, and restore energy levels. If symptoms of depression are present, acupuncture can serve as a valuable complementary therapy; however, it's important to discuss any mental or emotional health concerns with your primary care provider or a mental health professional.

### **Can My Partner or Other Family Members Also Benefit from Acupuncture?**

Absolutely. Acupuncture is a holistic practice that can support not only the birthing parent but also partners and closely involved family members. Pregnancy can be an emotionally intense and sometimes stressful time for everyone, even when things are going smoothly. Acupuncture helps rebalance Qi and activate the parasympathetic nervous system—the body's natural “rest, digest, and heal” response—promoting relaxation and supporting overall well-being. For partners and family members, this can enhance emotional resilience, improve physical health, and foster a calmer, more connected family environment. Beyond immediate stress relief, regular acupuncture can also serve as a preventive practice, helping reduce the risk of future illness.

More research on acupuncture in pregnancy is still needed, but my hope is that one day every Women & Newborn's unit in the country will have its own acupuncture clinic. As more women begin pregnancy in better health, receive more comprehensive prenatal care, and explore holistic options for conception, pregnancy, and childbirth, the demand for integrative support continues to grow. In the meantime, I am honored to provide a safe, compassionate space to help you achieve the healthiest, most comfortable, and fulfilling prenatal and postpartum experience possible.



### **Mind & Body ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Dr. Yana Symonenko is the founder of AcupunctureRocks in Santa Clara, Utah, and holds a doctoral degree in acupuncture and Chinese medicine from Pacific College of Health and Science. Guided by an “East meets West” approach, she combines the wisdom of ancient healing practices with a strong foundation in Western medicine to provide personalized, holistic care that addresses the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of health.

Dr. Symonenko is passionate about helping patients restore balance, enhance well-being, and cultivate a deeper connection between mind, body, and spirit through acupuncture. Outside her practice, she enjoys yoga and breathwork, hiking with her pups, traveling, cooking nourishing meals, and exploring human anatomy and physiology—as well as the intersection of Eastern and Western medicine.

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