

Holistics ease pre-birth pain

Alison King | Monday, December 26, 2011 5:00

Pregnancy, a time when you're blooming, your skin has a natural glow and you look radiant.



Acupuncture is among the treatments finding favour with pregnant women. Photo / Supplied

They may look the picture of health from the outside, but ask pregnant women how they're feeling and they will have a list of complaints - tiredness, aches and pains, difficulty walking, anxiety, anaemia, pins and needles, nausea, the list goes on.

But there's no need to suffer in silence as more and more

holistic treatments are being used by expectant mothers to help them make the nine-month experience that little bit more comfortable.

From acupuncture to cranial osteopathy, pregnancy massage to acupressure, there is plenty of treatments available.

Mum-of-two Lisa Adams swears by acupuncture, which she used to relieve morning sickness and to prepare her body for labour and birth.

"Every labour is so different but having had two they only get better," she says.

She is mum to Kaden, 2, and Zari, 6 weeks.

"I only had acupuncture with Zari for the three weeks prior to birth as I had such a good pregnancy anyway, but I know of friends who had issues and sought treatment earlier," Adams says.

"I looked at acupuncture for pain relief during labour. Every session before gets your body ready and increases the energy flow to the uterus. It was amazing how much it worked for me. I'm very glad I did it as it helped get me in the right space."

Acupuncture has been used for thousands of years to treat a big range of ailments. It is a remedy sought by more and more pregnant women as they try to minimise exposure to pharmaceuticals.

Acupuncturist Kate O'Connor was formerly a midwife. She changed careers for a greater work-life balance but is still involved in working with pregnant women.

"It distresses me to think someone can go through something their whole pregnancy and not get

help," O'Connor says.

"It excites me that these conditions can be treated so easily without drugs and the women receive help rather than think it's a pregnancy complaint."

She rattles off a long list of what can be treated - and it's by no means exhaustive. Nausea, digestive problems, heartburn, anaemia, anxiety, stress, depression, insomnia, post-traumatic birth problems, headaches, hip and back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, varicose veins, breech and posterior babies, hypertension, skin conditions and more.

"I enjoy giving acupuncture to pregnant women because they respond beautifully to it.

"We use very fine needles and often you don't feel them go in.

"Most people will leave feeling great."

As well as acupuncture for the 40 weeks of pregnancy, the treatment, and acupressure, can be used to prepare the body for labour and during birth.

O'Connor says expectant mothers are seen from 36 weeks onwards, once a week, and birth support partners are shown how to be of help during birth. The most often used pressure points are in the lower back to help the uterus, but proper training must be given to ensure it is done correctly.

It's not only beneficial to the mothers but also the support. "They can feel more in control."

It's not only needles that alleviate pregnancy complaints. Mum-of-two Michelle Urquhart had a trouble-free first pregnancy. But when in her third trimester with Kate, now 9, she had pins and needles in her hands at night, making it uncomfortable to sleep and resulting in her becoming very tired.

Knowing she couldn't be treated by her usual osteopath she asked if there was an alternative.

She was told about cranial osteopathy.

"I was a real sceptic but willing to give anything a try because I was getting no sleep," she says.

"One session and I didn't need to have any more.

"My neck was out, which is a standard problem in pregnancy but because of being in the third trimester and the hormones had loosened my joints, normal osteopathy was out.

"They used fluid pressure, a bit like clamping a hose.

"They did all the different points in my head and gently put it back in place.

"I'm a convert."

Also available are pregnancy-specific forms of yoga, pilates, massage and hypnotherapy.