

## Acupuncture 'pregnancy pain cure'

*Acupuncture is effective at relieving pelvic pain during pregnancy, a study says.*

Pelvic girdle pain is common among pregnant women with one in three affected suffering severe pain.

Researchers found acupuncture was better at easing the pain than standard and specialised exercising.

The team from Gothenburg's Institute for the Health of Women and Children said the medical profession should be more open to using acupuncture.

Report co-author Helen Elden, a midwife at the institute, said: "The study shows that methods other than structured physiotherapy may be effective in treating pelvic girdle pain in pregnancy and that acupuncture represents an effective alternative."



Pelvic girdle pain is severe in a third of cases

**It [acupuncture] is good because it does not involve any drugs, which women have to be careful about taking during pregnancy**

Daniel Maxwell

And she added: "A combination of several methods is probably even better."

The team studied the effect of three six-week treatment programmes on 386 pregnant women suffering from pelvic girdle pain, which it is thought is caused by hormones affecting ligaments and muscles.

One group were given a standard home exercise routine, a second received the exercise routine and acupuncture, while the third had a specialised exercise regime aimed at improving mobility and strength.

Pain levels were recorded every morning and evening and assessments were done by an independent examiner.

The women using acupuncture experienced the best results, followed by those who underwent the specialised exercise programme.

Daniel Maxwell, a member of the British Acupuncture Council, the regulatory body for acupuncturists, said the benefits of acupuncture for pregnant women was well known.

**The use of acupuncture to treat pain during pregnancy certainly seems credible**

Dr Graham Archard

"Many pregnant women turn to acupuncture to relieve pain, especially pelvic pain.

"It is good because it does not involve any drugs, which women have to be careful about taking during pregnancy."

But he said the medical profession needed to be more consistent in recommending acupuncture as a treatment.

"Some GPs and midwives do refer people on for acupuncture, but some don't. It really does vary from area to area."

Dr Graham Archard, vice-chair of the Royal College of GPs, said 60% of family doctors use alternative therapies.

"The use of acupuncture to treat pain during pregnancy certainly seems credible.

"Pregnant women should be avoiding drugs so acupuncture, which releases the bodies natural painkillers, should be of benefit."

And Sue Macdonald, of the Royal College of Midwives, said: "Women should be offered acupuncture for this type of pain, but we must remember it might not be for everyone."

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