

# Reflexology in pregnancy and childbirth - Sharon's baby

## A Case Study by Sarah Brown MAR

I first met Sharon in 1997 when she first came to me for massage, she liked it so much, she sent her mother along too. This was not frequent as Nancy lives in New York! In March 2000 I qualified as a reflexologist, and Sharon had heard all about my course as it progressed.

In April 2000, Sharon came for a massage and told me she was pregnant with her second child and decided to book for a reflexology next time. Antenatal treatments baby due mid November.

### First treatment - 4 months pregnant June 2000

This was Sharon's second pregnancy, she already had a healthy son who was four, and he had been born by emergency caesarean section following a long hard breech labour. It had been a very tiring pregnancy and Sharon remembered feeling very anxious.

### Aim of reflexology treatment

- Relieve nausea
- Ease tiredness and help poor sleep
- Help ease constipation

As anyone who has either been pregnant or looked after someone who is pregnant will know, these are all very common ailments that may make women feel wretched. One does not get much sympathy, as pregnancy is not an illness and media images abound of superwomen who achieve great things. Most of us continue our work and childcare grinning and bearing it, if we do bloom it is a real bonus! I felt sure that reflexology could help as it is so good at balancing the body, and it would certainly help to relax Sharon.

### Feet during first visit:

Sharon's feet were very well cared for, supple and healthy

### Reflexes that seemed unbalanced:

Mouth  
Neck, and old injury  
Shoulders  
Lung  
Stomach - really low energy here  
Transverse colon  
Kidney on right foot and bladder on both feet

I gave a full treatment with the emphasis being very much to relax Sharon. She was feeling pretty tired as she has a very demanding teaching job and a lively son. The nausea and vomiting was really getting her down. I was mindful to acknowledge the reproductive reflexes and not over stimulate them.

Sharon really enjoyed the treatment and was surprised at how relaxed she felt. She said that she felt she had been on a guided journey! She rebooked for the following month.

### Second treatment - 22 weeks pregnancy

Reactions following last treatment; Sharon was very pleased that her constipation eased within a week of the treatment, and it never returned during the pregnancy. We both felt certain that it was the reflexology that helped.

Today, Sharon felt very sick and headachy. Also totally exhausted as her son has had chicken pox. She also was experiencing cramps at night. We discussed diet and fluids, Sharon was doing the best she could but knew she had to drink lots of water.

### Reflex focus - A full treatment given

Aimed to help the endocrine system. I recommended that Sharon got as much rest as possible. At the end of the treatment, she asked me to give her reflexology during her labour, I said yes quickly, and said I would do some research through the summer. Next appointment was fixed for September following the holidays. Her headache was much improved.

### Third treatment - 29 weeks pregnant

As luck would have it, our local reflexology support group had a whole evening about reflexology in pregnancy and labour. Two wonderful practising midwives and reflexologists came and talked to us about their experiences with women. It was a fascinating evening and they were both very encouraging to me. They both recommended a book by Susanne Enzer an Australian midwife who is also a practicing reflexologist, details at the end. I found this book very helpful and worth reading if you are interested in this area.

Sharon came for her third treatment, the sickness and nausea was loads better but she was now suffering from indigestion and exhaustion.

### Reflex focus - A full treatment given

I gave extra attention to the liver and whole digestive system, the colon seemed dry. Interestingly, both uterus reflexes felt puffy and remained so throughout the rest of the pregnancy - was this the baby now? I felt certain it was, and from now on, I always felt there were three of us in the treatment room! Sharon told me she was feeling far more relaxed in this pregnancy, even though she was so tired.

### Treatments 4,5 and 6 - 33, 38, and 39 weeks pregnant

Sharon was progressing well, she found the last few weeks at work difficult, but was surrounded by kind colleagues who were all very supportive. She stopped work at 35 weeks gestation - not much longer to go. Sharon said the baby would not be late and was due the day after Thanksgiving.

### Reflex focus

Sharon's symptoms were very much tied up with poor appetite due to the growing baby taking up room in the abdomen; this was also making her breathless. I worked the appropriate reflexes accordingly. This was reflected on the left foot particularly, in that there was far more dry harder skin over the lung reflex. Sharon was also getting internal abdominal pain, the midwife had reassured her that everything was fine and it was due to the baby pressing on nerves. Sharon's left foot was now significantly hotter at each visit, I wasn't quite sure why but put it down to hormones! We now agreed that Sharon would come for weekly treatments until the baby came.

At the 6th visit when Sharon was 39 weeks pregnant, all was well, the baby was now engaged, this means that the baby's head has gone down into the mother's pelvis and is good news. Sharon had a better appetite as there was more room for her stomach to receive food and labour could not be far away. She was now having lots of practice contractions that are called Braxton Hicks contractions. These show that the uterus is gearing up for the work to come!

I was now on standby and we had agreed that if possible I would come and give Sharon a full treatment in early labour before she went into hospital

### Treatment 7 - 39.5 weeks pregnant

Two days before our arranged appointment, Sharon rang me to say she had had a "show" that morning and had been experiencing strong Braxton Hicks all weekend. I offered to go round and give her a treatment at home to relax her (and me!) And give her body the best start to labour.

It was a lovely visit for me, we sat on Sharon's bed with both her cats and I gave her a gentle treatment. Sharon was happy and excited, she had been cleaning her house like mad, and we both laughed as she was obviously experiencing a nesting instinct! Her feet seemed quite different to the prior visit; both heels were really damp,