

Breech Presentation and use of traditional Acupuncture and Moxibustion

The use of acupuncture and moxibustion for attempting to turn breech babies is a well – documented treatment and its simplicity and non invasive nature have made it a popular choice for pregnant woman to explore before conventional medical procedures.

Between weeks 29 and 32 of pregnancy, approximately 15% of babies are in the breech position (Kauppila 1975). Only 3% to 4% of these continue in the breech position until labour. However, the longer this position is maintained into the pregnancy, the less chance there is of the baby turning. Nowadays, the usual management of delivery if the baby is still in the breech position at 38 weeks is to do a caesarean section.

Causes of breech position

One in four babies will present by breech at some stage of pregnancy, but by 34 weeks most of these will have changed. In the majority of cases there are no obvious reasons for a breech position but the cause may be: a low-lying placenta, premature birth, multiple pregnancy, poly-hydramnios, hydrocephalus, fibroids, or an unusually shaped uterus..... All these conditions are contraindicated to trying to turn a breech pregnancy.

Chinese viewpoint

The Bao Mai channel links the centre, the strength of essence of fertility with the uterus.

To the Chinese, if there is a **constitutional deficiency** of the essence the fetus cannot maintain its position.

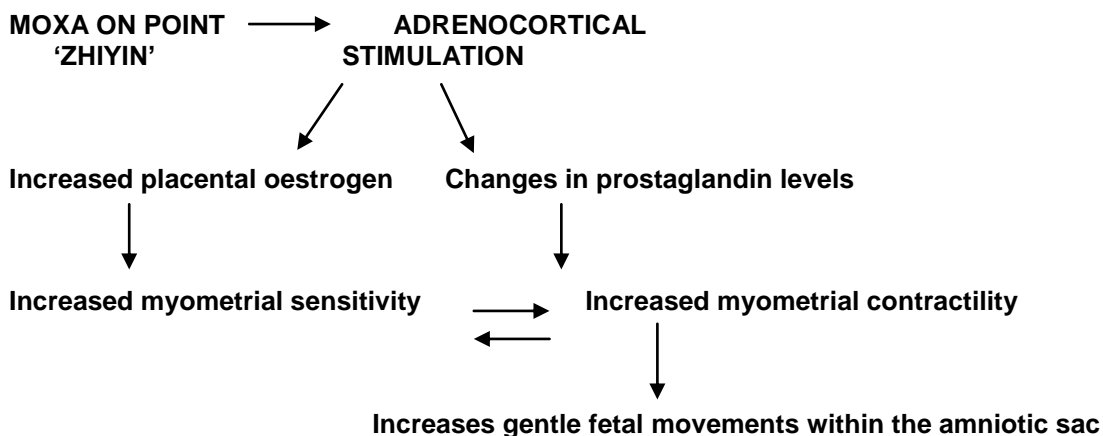
Treatment with acupuncture

Considering all the potential outcomes and dangers of having a breech baby, it is not surprising that women will turn to acupuncture for help rather than have a caesarean section. However, a strict code should always be followed to ascertain the safety of the process, and a number of points to watch are listed below.

My experience as a midwife over three decades together with, sound knowledge and experience as a consultant acupuncturist I have turned many breeches, and have had greatest success between 32 and 35 weeks. Having said this, some patients have managed to turn as late as 38 weeks. It is certainly worth making the attempt in order to avoid caesarean section, and I have come across no side-effects as a result of this treatment. The significant complication comes when a practitioner of acupuncture has limited experience in this field and she or he is not aware of number of contra indications I therefore recommend that each case is assessed and the acupuncturist works alongside the Midwifery team to ensure safety and effectiveness of the treatment

Moxibustion for turning breech babies

Alongside acupuncture much attention has been given to the turning of breech babies using moxibustion. Moxibustion is a way of stimulating acupuncture points with heat, which can encourage the fetus to turn. The technique employs a lighted moxa stick held near the point BL-67 on the little toe. It appears that by stimulating production of maternal hormones (placental oestrogen and prostaglandin) (Budd 1992), it encourages some gentle movements in the uterus, which in turn stimulates fetal movement and with the gravity and some mild activity the baby turns into a correct position .



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