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PREGNANCY, LABOUR and DELIVERY

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

MASSAGE THERAPY DURING PREGNANCY

Physical Benefits:

Each pregnancy is unique. Each client and their reactions are different. Every day is different for the expectant Mother. As any pregnant woman can tell you, aches, pains, soreness, swelling, fatigue, exhaustion, anxiety, and joy can all be felt in any amount, in any order, at any given time throughout the days, weeks, and months as your pregnancy progresses. Therefore, each Massage Therapy treatment will be individual, based on the needs of the Mother in that moment. The following are some examples of how Registered Massage Therapy can help with common symptoms associated with pregnancy:

Symptom	Why?	What can RMT do?
Fatigue	Typical during 1 st and 3 rd trimesters. 1 st -- ↓ blood pressure and blood sugar, ↑ metabolism due to placental growth. 3 rd – due to physical demands for nutrients for the rapidly growing baby. As well as the mood-swing rollercoaster!	RMT can be very effective for relaxation, as well as helping to rejuvenate the mind and body. RMT techniques can: ↑ circulation, ↓ muscle tension. These elements often allow the Mother to truly relax and unwind, temporarily alleviating some of her fatigue.
Achiness, Muscle Cramps	As the baby grows, your belly needs to accommodate! The hormone <i>relaxin</i> is released to help ligaments stretch, primarily to widen the hips, but it also affects other joints in the body.	When joints widen, it can place extra tension or stress on the muscles connecting over them. RMT can help to relieve knotted and ropey muscles resulting from that added tension.
Fluid Retention, Swelling (Edema)	During the later stages of pregnancy, fluid tends to accumulate in the tissues, especially in the lower legs -- due to added blood volume, workload placed on the circulatory system, as well as the weight of the baby pressing on the major vein leading from your legs back to your heart.	By releasing tension on muscles and tissues, the RMT can help to expedite the movement of excess fluids through the body. As well as provide insight into proper positioning and other interventions the Mother can employ on her own to reduce excessive fluid accumulation.
Headaches, Migraines	There are many reasons why pregnancy can induce headaches or migraines. Increasing hormone and fluid levels can contribute to headaches, as well as increasing muscle tension through the neck and back.	As any migraine sufferer will know, dealing with one while in its throws, is a temperamental and delicate endeavor. Controlled environment, aromatherapy, and relaxing techniques can help to alleviate.
Sciatica	This is a particularly troublesome issue with some pregnant women – combined with the added tension and stress placed on the joints and muscles, the added weight on the front of the body causes some posterior postural muscles to activate more frequently and with greater strength. The gluteus muscle group are particularly susceptible to this, often causing narrowing of the region where the sciatic nerve runs down into the leg.	The RMT can employ several specialized techniques to alleviate symptoms associated with sciatic issues. Restoring the space for the sciatic nerve to travel through the hip into the leg can mean the difference between walking, or lying on your side in bed all day. Sciatic pain can be severe and debilitating, and high levels of pain for long periods of time can significantly affect mood. In this case, RMT can restore more than just the sciatic nerve.
Dizziness, Nausea	“Morning sickness” is a common symptom during the first trimester, but can often come and go, or even extend through the duration of the pregnancy.	Much like migraines, there may be nothing to stop it from happening, but RMT may be able to provide a relaxing, controlled environment to alleviate the frustration that comes with it.

3 STAGES OF LABOUR

1.) Early (Latent) Labour:

This is usually the longest stage of labour, but thankfully, the least intense. During this time, your cervix is beginning to dilate (approx. 3cm). You may also begin to feel mild to moderate contractions lasting 30-45 seconds, approximately every 20 minutes.

Some women do not feel these early labour pains at all, especially if their cervix is dilating very slowly over a long period of time, or even if they have a very high pain tolerance. Women often describe the type of pain as being “crampy”, or akin to a “backache”. At this point, you may even have a small amount of a blood-tinged discharge (aka bloody-show), this is normal. However, contact your healthcare provider if the blood appears bright red, there is a lot of it, or you think your water has broken.

This stage of labour is the perfect time to contact your RMT – describe to her in detail your symptoms. She will either come directly to your house, or give you tips and tricks over the phone to help you through the increasing pain. You will need all the help you can get to prep for the big show!

2.) Active Labour

During this time, your contractions will grow stronger and longer, lasting 40-60 seconds, every 4 minutes, and are usually slightly more regular in intervals and duration. By this time, you should be either at the hospital, or your designated birthing centre, in the company of other medical and/or birthing professionals.

During this time, the RMT is able to provide certain pain control measures depending upon the Mother’s individual needs in the moment. It is the role of the RMT to read the symptoms and reactions of the Mother during her labour pains and attempt to apply certain Massage Therapy interventions accordingly. This is a time of purely trial and error – the Mother may be receptive to one type of touch one moment, and grimacing in pain the next. Good communication between the RMT and the Mother is imperative during this phase to optimize the pain controlling effects the RMT is able to provide.

3.) Transitional (Advanced) Labour

Transitional labour is as it sounds – the transition of the baby through the birth canal and out into the world. This is usually the most intensive, but luckily the shortest phase of the labour process. At this point, contractions are very strong, lasting 60-90 seconds, and 2-3 minutes apart. Another distinctive feature of this phase of labour is the feeling of heaviness or pressure in the lower abdominal area – often described as the urge to “bear-down”. It also sometimes presents as pain in the lower back, or rectal area.

Now is the time when the RMT may use their skills to assist with breathing patterns, mind-body awareness, and muscle contraction techniques. Traditional massage techniques will likely not be useful during this phase of labour, but having a calm, guiding voice by your side can mean the difference between exhaustion and determination.

CONTACT ME for more information about you pregnancy and what RMT can do for you!

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