

The verdict

'I was tired and drained after the birth, and that's why I went back to the clinic,' says Laura. 'After the treatment I certainly had more energy, and I think it helped me to avoid depression. too.' And while she was initially wary of acupuncture - which Andrew employs mainly for relaxation purposes - Laura is now a convert: 'After a while it felt like I was almost addicted to it. It was like having some time

out - a bit like therapy." What's more, when Laura returned to Healthwise with Olivia a few weeks after the birth to get more herbs to give her body a boost, she discovered that it's not just new mums who can benefit from Chinese medicine. 'Olivia had a lot of wind when she was very little, and a bit of colic,' she says. 'She really struggled with stomach cramps, and Andrew advised me to give her fennel seed water help with her digestion.' And that wasn't the only solution he provided. Laura adds, 'Andrew massaged a special pressure point in the fleshy bit between Olivia's thumb and finger, and the

A lifestyle choice

Having had eight sessions at the Healthwise Clinic before, during and after her pregnancy, Laura is so impressed with Andrew's methods that she and Olivia now pay visits to his clinic to deal with their everyday health problems. 'Andrew just takes my pulse and looks at my tongue,' Laura says, 'It's incredible - he can always tell what's wrong with me straight away! He'll say something like, "You've got a sore knee today haven't you?". And he's always right!

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me to avoid depression, too'

when I'd developed a painful shoulder from always carrying Olivia on the same side,' she continues. 'I had acupuncture

and cupping (where heated cups are placed on the skin to encourage blood flow and soothe aches and pains), and although I was left with a lot of bruises, it wasn't at all painful. We've also used Chinese herbs when Olivia's had a cold. So, while some people might

'The last time I went was

remain sceptical of Chinese methods, Laura and Olivia's happy experiences in Andrew's hands have certainly been enough to convince her. 'He's a bit of a miracle worker.' she concludes.

wind came out at both ends!'

FURTHER INFO

Rapid recovery

New mum Laura found that Chinese medicine helped both her and her baby to recover quickly after the birth

both pregnancy and birth are amazing experiences, they can also be exhausting. First-time mum Laura Connor wanted to ensure that she was as well equipped as possible to deal with the labour, and the aftermath, so that she'd be able to enjoy and bond with her baby as soon as possible after the birth. She had visited local Chinese medicine practitioner Andrew Loosely at the Healthwise Clinic in Buckinghamshire in the past, and the treatment had proved to be such a revitalising experience - both mentally and physically that it felt natural for her to employ Chinese medicine to help her through her pregnancy and labour.

There's no doubt that although

Be prepared

To ensure a quick recovery after the birth, a healthy pregnancy is a must, and Andrew's treatment began early in order to achieve this. Laura took a course of Chinese herbs and had sessions of acupuncture both before falling pregnant with Olivia (now aged two), and during her pregnancy. Andrew explains: 'If a woman has had pre-conception treatment her blood quality and energy levels - which are of fundamental importance in Chinese medicine - will be correct when she becomes

pregnant, which will ensure she's not tired by her pregnancy. She's going to be looking after another human being, so if her energy depletes it can have serious consequences."

Andrew expects to treat a woman anywhere between a couple and a dozen times during her pregnancy, but he's keen to stress that his work at Healthwise should be seen as an add-on to a 'Western' approach: 'We're not medical practitioners in the Western sense, so we can't take over a pregnancy. Mothers will still go down the normal birth route - home or hospital, whatever they've decided.'

Happily, Laura had an easy pregnancy and a straightforward delivery, and Olivia weighed a healthy 8lb on arrival. But while Andrew's treatment had prepared Laura for this moment by ensuring she was healthy and full of energy during her exciting nine months, his work really began after the birth.

Bouncing back 'After the birth we concentrate on helping the mother to recover,' says Andrew. 'It's a case of balancing energy levels and blood quality, because the root problem is always the same from a Chinese medical point of view. The Chi (energy) and quality of a woman's blood

'After the birth we help the mother to recover - it's a case of balancing energy levels and blood quality'



For most of the new mothers who attend the clinic, it takes two visits over a fortnight or three weeks to restore their energy (using both herbal remedies and acupuncture). But Andrew says: 'We work until the person is happy - it could be in a week, it could take a year.'

This flexible time-frame is key to Andrew's postnatal work, as he feels it's not just a case of restoring energy but also of preventing the onset of mental problems like postnatal depression - something he thinks can be inevitable if a new mother doesn't properly recover from the strains of the birth. 'If your energy drops you can't function properly, and neither can your mind work effectively - you can become irritable and unhappy,' he says. 'I often see women who are suffering from

depression 10 years on, because they didn't take time out after the birth to recover properly.' He stresses that his approach is focused on prevention rather than cure - hoping to avoid the problem in the first place.

THE THEORY



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