



How Reflexology can support you before, during and after pregnancy

What is Reflexology?

- Reflexology is a complementary therapy. It is not used instead of medical care, it *complements* it.
- Reflexology uses gentle pressure on points on the feet, hands, or face to reduce stress, boost the immune system, help sleep, balance mood and hormones, and bring about well being.
- A Reflexologist should work with you, your midwife, doctors, and any other complementary health practitioners for your benefit.

Where does Reflexology come from?

- Hand or foot massage has always been popular, but there is evidence that foot massage as a form of medical therapy existed in Ancient Egypt around 4500 years ago.
- The Chinese used foot massage as a medical therapy in the 4th century BC, and over the last few centuries healers in the Americas and Europe discovered that pressure on one part of the body can relieve pain in another.
- The word 'Reflexology' was invented about 100 years ago to describe the techniques we use today.

How can Reflexology support you?

- Reflexology is perfectly safe before, during, and after pregnancy and can help with stress, anxiety, depression, hormone balancing, and all the niggles of pregnancy.



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Reflexology before pregnancy

- For couples trying to conceive it can be a stressful time, especially if it takes longer than they hoped. Long-term stress can cause hormones to become unbalanced.
- Reflexology can be used to balance hormones and reduce stress, increasing the chance of conception.

Reflexology during pregnancy

- Reflexology is particularly helpful for stress, anxiety, and/or depression during pregnancy. Reducing stress levels may also help reduce the risk of pre-eclampsia (very high blood pressure), gestational diabetes, and preterm labour.
- It can also help with morning sickness, heartburn, constipation, headaches, back pain, and swollen ankles.
- There is *no* evidence that reflexology can cause a miscarriage, and by reducing stress it may even help prevent miscarriage.
- Reflexology self-help can be carried out on the hands by you or a partner at any time. It is impossible to cause harm with Reflexology.

Helping prepare for labour with Reflexology

- From 37+ weeks Reflexology may be used to stimulate the reproductive areas and certain endocrine glands in order to help prepare the body for labour.
- There is scientific evidence that regular Reflexology during pregnancy may reduce pain during labour and reduce the length of labour.*

*Valiani M et al. (2010) Reviewing the effect of Reflexology on pain and outcomes of the labour of primiparous women. *Iranian Journal of Nursing and Midwifery Research*.

Reflexology during labour

- Reflexology may be useful during labour to strengthen contractions and calm breathing.
- Encourage your support person to help with hand Reflexology and solar plexus breathing on the hands.

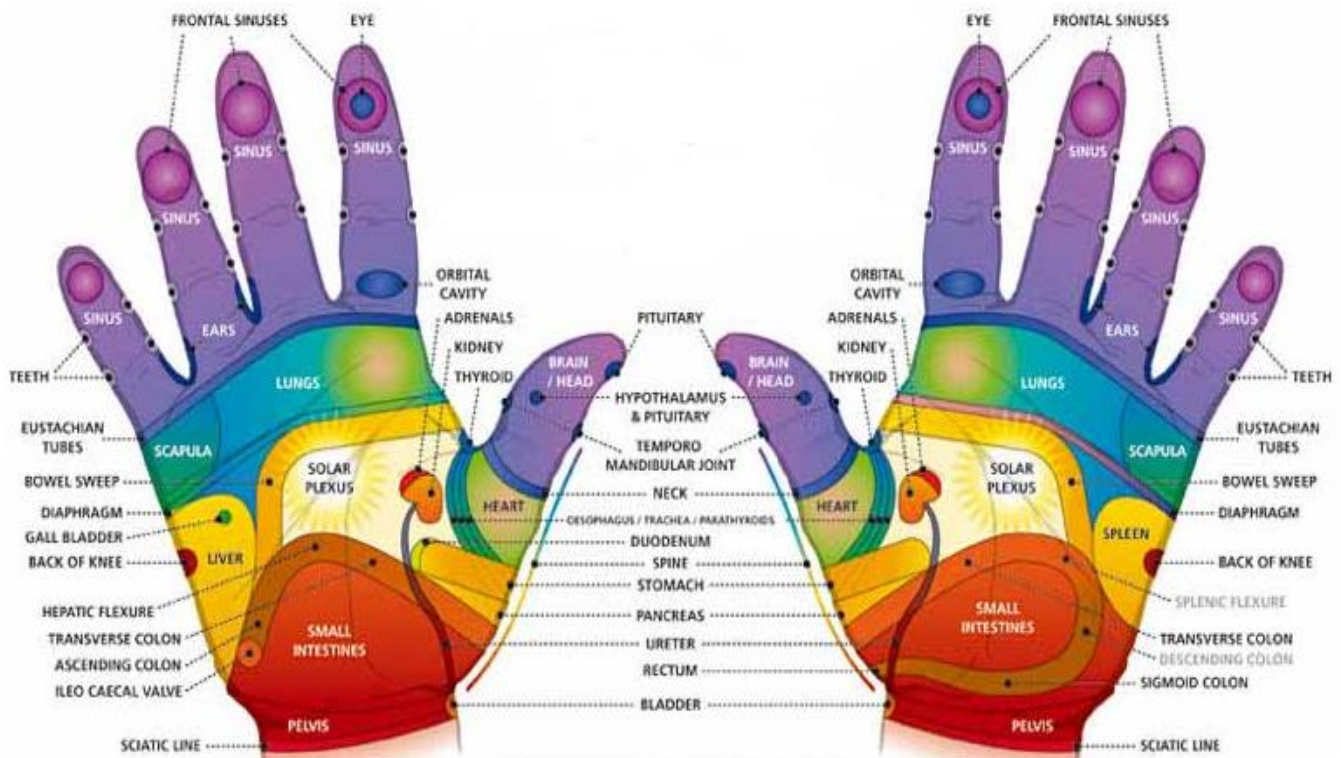


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Hand Reflexology self-help

If in doubt, work the thumb (brain/head), centre of the hand (solar plexus), and the adrenal glands. These points will help to calm and balance the nervous system and balance some of the main hormones.



Anxiety

- Adrenal glands – to calm the production of adrenalin.
- Solar plexus – to calm nerves.
- Shoulders – to ease tension.

Depression

- Brain/head – to calm chemical imbalances. This will also cover the hypothalamus and pituitary glands, balancing hormones.
- Solar plexus – to calm nerves.

Solar plexus breathing

- Your birthing partner can learn how to do this– it’s a great way to support and calm the nerves.
- Hold the solar plexus point on each hand.
- Ask your client to take five *slow deep* breaths, breathing out even more slowly.
- As your client breathes in, breathe in too and press gently on the solar plexus points.
- As your client breathes out, breathe out yourself and slowly release the pressure on the points.

After the baby is born

- Reflexology will help you relax and may make breastfeeding easier.
- Reflexology has been *proven* to help sleep after birth.**
- Reflexology can help balance hormones, so it is great for trying to prevent baby blues and postnatal depression, helping milk production, and helping the uterus return to its pre-pregnant state.

** Li C-Y et al. (2011) Randomised controlled trial of the effectiveness of using foot reflexology to improve quality of sleep amongst post partum women. *Midwifery*.

When should you have Reflexology?

- First and second trimesters – as needed to reduce anxiety and depression and relieve symptoms such as constipation or backache. Once a month maintains well-being, more often may be needed for specific issues.
- Third trimester – once a month or every 3 weeks until 37+ weeks, then appointments once a week or twice weekly if possible.
- Due date – Reflexology may be particularly useful to relieve stress around the due date, when some women feel pressurised to go into labour then and there.
- 40+ weeks – twice weekly.
- On the day of a sweep – Reflexology complements the effect of a sweep and may help to avoid an induction.
- Postnatally – in the first week after birth and after as needed.



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Reflexology for babies

- Reflexology may also help with colic, constipation, feeding difficulties, sleep problems, etc in babies.
- Mums, dads, and other carers may want to talk to a Reflexologist about learning how to give simple, gentle foot treatments to their baby. These are soothing and calming for stressed babies, especially if the birth did not go as naturally as planned.

About me

- Nicki Lampon BSc (Hons) in Life Sciences.
- Fully qualified member of Reflexology New Zealand.
- Certificates in Maternity Reflexology (parts 1 and 2), Reflexology Lymph Drainage, Facial Reflexology, Hot Stone Reflexology, and Vertical Reflex Therapy.
- Clinic at 40 Auckland Road, Greenmeadows, Napier.
- I have a particular interest in Maternity Reflexology and offer Reflexology treatments before, during, and after pregnancy. I am also a Fertility Reflexologist, helping clients with subfertility.



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