Take the sting out

Owner of the Meridian Acupuncture Clinic Paul O'Brien offers advice on how to prevent urinary tract infections happening during pregnancy using self-massage.

UTI prevention self-massage guide

Take a few minutes three times each day to find a comfortable, quiet area, free from distraction, and massage the following points in a circular motion for 60 seconds at a time. Don't use too much pressure and make sure to relax and enjoy the light massage. The primary points are Bi-23 and SP-9. The other two are optional depending on the nature of the UTI.

Bi-23

This is located about an inch off the lower border of the second lumbar vertebrae. The easy way to find it is to put your hands on your hip bones and let your fingers point in to your spine. Count up one vertebrae and there you are.

The easiest way to massage this point is with the knuckles, and to just rub up and down along the spine.

This point directly affects the kidneys and is a staple in Chinese treatments. In pregnancy, it is helpful in alleviating any bloating that occurs as well as lower back pain. It also stimulates the points around the sacrum of the back.

SP-9

This can be found on the inside of the leg, just behind the big bony lump of the medial condyle of the knee.

Traditionally, this point is good for reducing any fever is present and resolves dampness and reduces tension from the back.

P-6

This point is located about two finger-widths up from the wrist crease on the forearm, in the groove between the bone and the flesh.

Used in cases of stress, heart burn, insomnia, depression, fatigue or a red-tired face. To use this point well, remember to light and tuck in to the skin gently.

LIV-3

This is one of the most important points, and is located on the bottom of the foot, in the depression between the bones of the first and second toe.

Again this is a powerful point when there is excess in the Liver. Not only does this point treat symptoms such as excess heat, depression, dullness, frustration, hot flashes, but it is also useful in reducing the sensation of bloating and anorexia.

Toilet tips

While for the most part hygiene isn't a worry, with cystitis, it's always a good idea to make sure you don't inadvertently spread the infection. E. coli, which causes UTIs, is commonly transferred from the perineal area to the bladder. You can prevent this by washing your hands before and after going to the bathroom. Wait five minutes once you've voided and seek medical advice if you have a big impact on UTI prevention. The key is to keep the bathroom wait five minutes once you've voided and try again. In this way, you can ensure your bladder is empty. And while sometimes inconvenient, it only takes a few minutes each time to ensure you get your bladder empty.
Take the sting out


URINARY tract infection (UTI) is a bacterial infection of the bladder that most commonly presents with a frequent painful burning urination, often with additional lower abdominal pain.

During pregnancy, acupuncture has been shown to be highly effective in preventing the recurrence of UTIs and there are techniques you can use yourself at home to help keep the condition at bay, or to alleviate symptoms.

Before following the self-massage guide below, however, it's important to stress that you don't take a 'wait and see' approach due to the potentially serious nature of UTIs in pregnancy. It's vital that you present with any of the symptoms to consult a midwife or medical practitioner as soon as possible.

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BI-23
This is located about an inch off the lower border of the second lumbar vertebrae. The easy way to find it is to put your hands on your hip bones and let your fingers point to your spine. Count up one vertebra and there you are.

The easiest way to massage this point is with the knuckles, and to just rub up and down along the sides of the spine.

This point directly strengthens the kidneys and is a staple of many pregnancy treatments. In particular, this helps to alleviate any blockages in urination as well as lower back pain. Remember to stimulate the point lightly on both sides of the back.

SP-9
This can be found just below the knee on the inside leg, in the depression just behind the big bump of the tibia (the medial condyle for any medical types).

Traditionally, this point clears heat, thus reducing any fever, pain and stinging, and resolves dampness (the effects of an infection) from the bowel/bladder region.

P-6
This point is located about three fingers up from the wrist bone on the outside of the forearm, in between the muscles.

Used in cases where there is excess heat in the heart – if, for instance, there has been insomnia, dream-disturbed sleep or a red-tipped tongue you would use this point with the others. Again, remember to lightly massage both arms.

LIV-3
This is one of the easiest points to find and is located on the foot. It is found in the depression at the junction of the bones of the first big and second toe.

Again this is an optional point, used when there is excess heat in the heart or liver. In this case, additional symptoms, such as extreme irritability, stress, frustration, hot, itchy eyes or headaches may be present as well. As with the other points, remember to stimulate both feet lightly.

Cool the fire
Drink at least six to eight glasses of water daily, avoiding fluids that are too hot.