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10 NEWS
CO-ANCHOR

HEATHER VAN NEST

HOW
ACUPUNCTURE
HELPED HER GET
PREGNANT

PLUS:

ENERGY & HEALING

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How acupuncture got me pregnant.

By 10 News Anchor
Heather Van Nest

Photos by Heather Van Nest
& Ryan Joseph (rjphoto.com)

I have to be honest... my husband chuckles every time I say, "an acupuncturist got me pregnant!"

Of course my daughter would not be here without his crucial contribution, but I truly believe acupuncture not only helped me get pregnant the first time we really "tried," but as I continued treatment throughout pregnancy, I was amazed that I didn't have any of the common pregnancy side effects including morning sickness, swollen ankles or extreme fatigue.

Trust me, I don't have Wonder Woman genes. I thought pregnancy automatically came with those issues. As a former TV investigative reporter--I'm naturally skeptical--but curious enough to give acupuncture a try.



There are no longterm, large scale, double blind scientific studies that show acupuncture can improve fertility, only small studies that suggest it can increase the odds of couples trying (IVF) in-vitro fertilization.

Western researchers speculate acupuncture increases blood flow to the uterus, relaxes muscle tissue, balances hormones and reduces stress. However, what caught my interest, is the fact that acupuncture has stood the test of time. It is one of the oldest healing practices in the world. It has been used for thousands of years.

The moment I turned 35 years old, it seemed as if every doctor suggested Clomid or other medications to increase my chances of becoming pregnant. I've never relied on medications to help me. Acupuncture seemed to be a more natural option without the risk of serious side effects.

My life dramatically changed 10 years ago when I switched to a simple, whole foods diet, cut down on my exposure to harsh chemicals in everyday products and added natural things that help--not hurt--my body. I figured I'd give acupuncture a try and either end up pregnant, more relaxed or disappointed that I blew \$50-70 dollars a session. I started seeing licensed acupuncturist, Carolyn Huff in Tampa, twice a week for 2 weeks and charting my basal body temperature every morning. She suspected I was a late ovulator (instead of ovulating around day 14, I apparently do around day 16--I had no idea!).

She took my pulse, took a look at the color of my tongue and talked about how according to Chinese medicine, certain foods can support while others hinder my chances of conceiving.

She said my slower pulse and light colored tongue suggested I was kidney yang deficient and that

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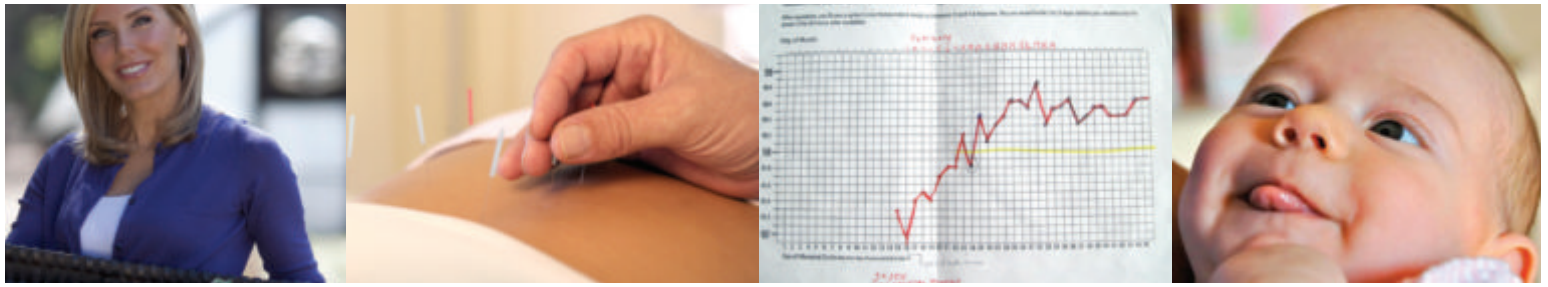
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How acupuncture got me pregnant.

I needed to eat more warming foods including soups, spices like cinnamon and turmeric and cooked vegetables.

As a member of Sweetwater Organic Community Farm in Town 'n Country, eating more fresh, cooked organic vegetables is a piece of cake, however, actually eating cake and other processed foods were to be avoided along with caffeine, alcohol and chemical sweeteners.

She tapped thin, disposable needles (almost as thin as a human hair) into my ankles, legs, abdomen, wrists and head. Most of the needles did not hurt, but I did feel a pinch when she placed needles near my ovaries.

She was able to use a temperature chart to help me pinpoint the exact day my husband and I should have our "date night." Two weeks later, Mike and I were speechless! The pregnancy test was positive! Yes, it could have been a coincidence, pure luck



or divine intervention, but I had been told by my gynecologist that most people don't get pregnant the first month they try and we might need some medical assistance because of a minor thyroid and previous autoimmune issue.

I liked the way I felt after my acupuncture session so I decided to stick with it throughout my pregnancy.

I work 3:00 p.m. to midnight. I anchor 5:00-6:30 p.m. newscasts and stay up late to anchor the

11:00 p.m. newscast on CBS 10 News. I needed any help I could get to stay up late, not look exhausted or a light shade of green from morning sickness!

I was crossing my fingers that it would work.

Surprisingly, my insurance company paid a portion of it for morning sickness--make sure you check with yours too. Acupuncture is not a one time treatment. Carolyn usually recommends one session, once a week, for three months.



This is where I was blown away... throughout my entire pregnancy, I didn't have morning sickness, swollen ankles, or any complications. I eat a clean, fresh diet and occasionally took prenatal yoga classes (with Lorraine at Yogani in Tampa) which I am sure contributed to a lot of that, but I know on some level, acupuncture helped me.

I also had the added stress of working all week until midnight and flying home each weekend to see my parents because my dad had been diagnosed with late stage cancer. Somehow I had the energy

to keep going without experiencing all of those pregnancy hormonal meltdowns. At this point, I was sold!

Acupuncture even helped me during the final weeks of pregnancy. My daughter was 8 days past her estimated delivery date!



Instead of trying all of the medical interventions my OB/GYN suggested, I turned to Dr. Xiao Zhang, M.D. and licensed acupuncturist, along with Dr. Yongjian Chen. They gave me several intense acupuncture sessions to stimulate labor. Yes, I'm smiling in this photo, but trust me, they were stimulating something!

They placed needles in my ear, back and even toes! I wrapped up the sessions on Saturday, October 30 and two days later, I gave birth to a healthy, 7 pound, 9 ounce, baby girl, Kingsley Grace. I interviewed Dr. Zhang about the benefits of acupuncture during pregnancy. She says it can help restore the natural balance of hormones and improve blood flow throughout the body. The theory is based on the fact that the body contains energy.

Licensed acupuncturists manipulate that energy by stimulating different points on the body. For example, in the case of morning sickness, she says it takes energy to have morning sickness. It's an imbalance of energy flow in the GI tract. The GI

How acupuncture got me pregnant.

tract usually flows downward while nausea flows upward. Acupuncture restores normal flow.

Popular integrative health expert, Dr. Andrew Weil, suggests acupuncture for much more than just fertility. He suggests trying it to help these conditions:

- Emotional disorders (anxiety, depression)
- Digestive complaints (nausea, vomiting, irritable bowel syndrome).
- Pain problems from injury or chronic degenerative disease (rheumatoid arthritis)
- Neurological problems (migraines, Parkinson's, stroke)
- Respiratory conditions (sinusitis, asthma)
- Gynecologic disorders
- Fatigue

You can search an online database through the Florida Department of Health to find a licensed acupuncturist. You can also check credentials with the American Academy of Medical Acupunc-

ture. The website is: medicalacupuncture.org.

I wanted to share my story with you because I am convinced of the benefits of acupuncture.

Had I not explored this option, I would've been funneled through the same system as so many women, and given medications to assist pregnancy and medical interventions to induce labor.

Acupuncture sessions over the course of 9 months are not cheap, but they're the gift I gave myself... an investment in my health as well as my daughter's health.



HEATHER VAN NEST is a TV News Anchor at 10 News, CBS in Tampa Bay. She created a webpage called "Heather's Natural Health" where she researches the latest nutrition studies, safer products worth your money, and shares quick and easy, whole food recipes.

www.wtsp.com/pub/naturalhealth/

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