HERBAL CLIPPINGS

BURNING MUGWORT
Huang Weixin, MD of the Jiangxi's Women's Hospital in Nanchang, China and Francesco Cardini, MD conducted a study of 260 women whose babies were in a breech position in the 33rd week of pregnancy. The half of the group given moxibustion with Chinese mugwort (Artemisia sp.) had more active babies, with an average of 48 compared to 35 movements per hour. In many cases, the babies turned themselves over. By 35 weeks, three-quarters of the babies were head-down, while only 48% of the control had turned. Only four moxibustion babies had low health scores, compared to 14 in a control group. The researchers say this suggests a breech position adversely affects the baby's health. The moxibustion treatments used the traditional cones made from mugwort. They were given at acupuncture point BL 67, located beside the outer corner of the fifth toenail for 15 minutes on each foot twice a day for seven days.


RASPBERRY SHORTENS LABOR
Many pregnant women use raspberry leaf (Rubus idaeus) to have a shorter and easier labor. The Holistic Nurses Association of New South Wales had nearly 200 Australian women take 2 tablets of 1.2g a day from the time they were eight months pregnant until labor. Raspberry did not shorten the first stage of labor, but significantly shortened the second stage by almost ten minutes compared to a control group. There were also fewer forceps deliveries (19.3% vs. 30.4%) with raspberry. It produced no adverse effects for mother or baby.


LICORICE - INDUCE EARLY LABOR
Pregnant women who take large amounts of licorice (Glycyrrhiza glabra) may have their babies earlier. Finnish researchers found the average birth weight of women who consumed more than 500 mg of licorice a week was two days earlier. Licorice had no effect on birth weight or the mother's blood pressure. The compound glycyrrhizin in licorice is thought responsible.


GINGER
Ginger (Zingiber officinale) can help nausea from morning sickness, seasickness, chemotherapy, or after surgery. In five out of six placebo studies, it helped people who took 1 gram of fresh ginger or ginger powder daily. No adverse effects were reported. Ginger's active compounds, gingerols, are thought to act on the central nervous system or to improve movement in the digestive system. The German Commission E Monographs [see AHA 14:4] warns that pregnant women should not take ginger because two Japanese studies in the 1980s showed the isolated compound may cause cell mutations. However, there is no evidence that ginger harms mother or baby.


A study at Thailand's Chiang Mai University found 32 women who took ginger (Zingiber officinalis) capsules (250 mg. four times a day) for four days in the first half of their pregnancy had about half the nausea and vomiting as 35 pregnant women who took a placebo. In some cases, it took two days before ginger took effect. No side effects were reported in the women or babies. This backs up a Danish study in which pregnant women—most hospitalized for severe nausea—got relief with ginger.


BLACKBERRY
Blackberry (Rubus fruticosus) has long been a popular laxative. A German study that compared it to a placebo found it was more effective.

Herbal Safety
Echinacea (Echinacea sp.) was found safe for use during pregnancy in the Motherisk Program at The Hospital for Sick Children after 112 women used it in their first trimester and compared to a control group. So far, the safety of St John's wort (Hypericum perforatum) during pregnancy has only been investigated in preliminary studies with mice. It produced no problems for them or their offspring.
