



# STEPPING *into health*

Based on the premise that we can heal our own bodies, reflexology works as a useful tool for family health, writes Lucy Corkhill

**T**here's something wonderfully empowering about having healing at your fingertips. Wherever you are, you have access to a natural potential for creating wellness for yourself and your family. Holistic therapies are exciting because they encompass a central truth we hold within us – we have the potential to heal. Reflexology is particularly exciting because you don't need anything special to do it – no herbs, no tinctures, no tools – just your hands. You can do it in a shopping queue, in the car,

at home and on holiday. A lot of western medicine takes our power away from us and into the hands of others. Reflexology puts that power right back into our hands.

Reflexology is the massage and stimulation of pressure points on the feet and hands (and, more recently, the face) to promote healing within the body. The feet are divided into a series of energy pathways or zones, much like the meridians we hear talked about in acupuncture. All the major organs and skeletal structure of the body are mapped onto the feet. It is interesting that even

the most sceptical of recipients is aware that some areas of their feet – usually those corresponding to glands and organs – are much more sensitive than others.

The best way to learn about anything is to try it yourself. Reflexology is such a gentle therapy, you can turn to it throughout your own and your family's life. Many women use reflexology in the last few weeks of their pregnancy to help get things moving. What a lot of them don't realise is that they've stumbled across something they can continue to use with their babies and growing children. You don't need to have studied reflexology to be able to practise simple healing techniques at home, and the results are so encouraging you may find that you never need to turn to the medicine cabinet for minor ailments again.

## Before & During Pregnancy

Several studies have shown the benefits of a course of reflexology when you are trying to conceive. By focusing on the areas on the feet that correlate to the reproductive organs and main hormone centres, you help create a more harmonious environment for a future baby. **Points to use:** Ovaries, fallopian tubes, pituitary and thyroid glands, spine.

Continuing with reflexology throughout pregnancy has been shown to reduce common complaints such as nausea, back pain, digestive/urinary problems and fluid retention. It is a safe and supportive therapy to use as the body changes, although some reflexologists won't treat until after three months of pregnancy.

**Points to use:** spine, kidneys, adrenal glands, liver, digestives, bladder, pancreas

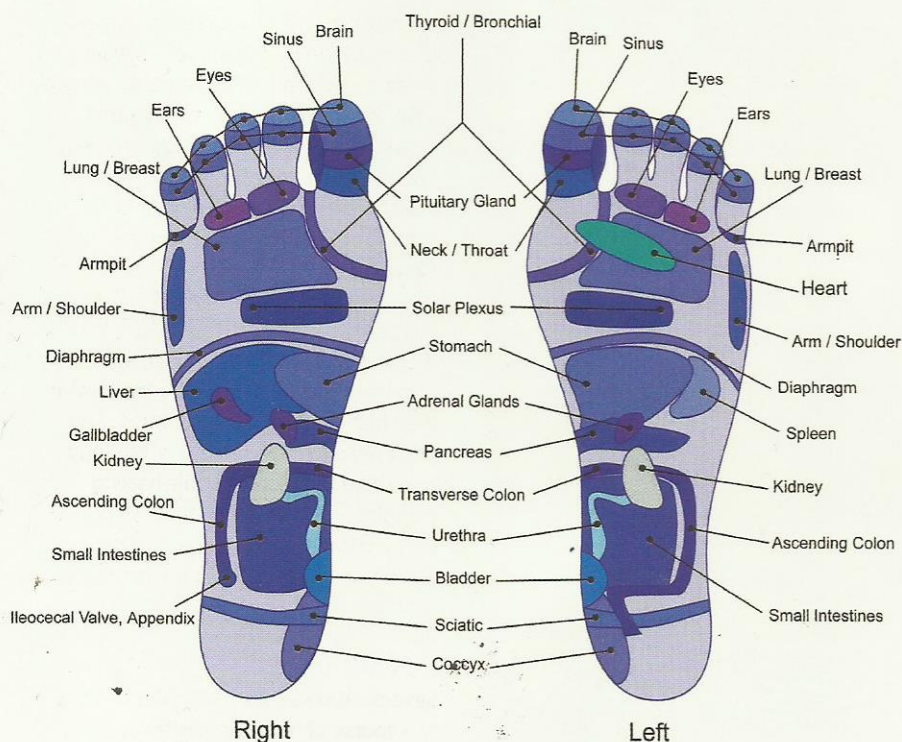
As your pregnancy comes to an end, one of the most gentle and intuitive ways to begin the birth journey is to tune in with your baby whilst your partner or friend stimulates the reproductive and hormone points on your feet. This has been known to have powerful results especially when combined with some quiet meditation, breathing and connecting in with the baby.

**Points to use:** uterus, ovaries, pituitary, adrenal glands, thyroid.

## Post-natal Reflexology

Reflexology is wonderfully restorative post-birth and is particularly lovely to receive whilst you are breastfeeding. One thing worth noting is that your partner/friend





can't do anything wrong – sometimes just a good foot massage is all you need to feel restored without focus on particular points. As with all therapies that are working on a holistic level, we often know intuitively what we need and will ask for more pressure on the areas that are really 'crying out' for it without necessarily knowing why! **Points to use:** pituitary, thyroid and adrenal glands, kidneys, liver, lungs and breasts

## Reflexology for Babies

We often comment in wonderment at how free and soft a baby's body is. Their incredible open-ness tends to mean that holistic treatments of any kind can work on a far deeper level in a much shorter time than it takes to bring about change in an adult with all our baggage! Gentle massage over the digestive area in the feet helps to soothe any tummy troubles and promote a healthy digestion. Working around the toes helps to wind a baby down for sleep. It's less important to focus on particular areas with a baby as you're usually just playing with their tiny feet when you're feeding or changing them. All babies respond well to foot massage and this in turn provides a healing full-body treatment for them.

## Reflexology for Children

There is an increasing interest in the use of reflexology for children with a range

of problems, ranging from ADHD to bedwetting, from anxiety to ear infections. A session of reflexology is a great way to wind down after a stressful day and prepare for sleep. It can be used with recurrent infections, to help stimulate the body's own healing defences. Children can be taught simple reflexology techniques to practise on themselves and friends (and who knows, they might even practise on you!). It's a wonderful thing to be able to send a teenager into an exam with a toolbox of discreet techniques they can use on themselves (hand reflexology is best for this) to manage stress.

Integrating reflexology into your family's life can have wide-ranging and immediate results. It can create a very special bond between giver and receiver and, because of this, it works on many different levels. Reaching for the paracetamol might sometimes feel like the easiest thing to do but spending time connecting with your loved one, and setting a healing intention, works in harmony with the body creating a deeper and more integrated kind of healing.

*Lucy Corkhill is a trained reflexologist and massage therapist, specialising in pregnancy and postnatal care. She is based in Brighton, East Sussex. See [natural-nurture.co.uk](http://natural-nurture.co.uk) for details.*

## Reflexology Time

Though it can be used pretty much anywhere, it can be useful, especially with older kids and adults, to set aside 'reflexology time' when you can relax and know you won't be disturbed. Turn off phones, computers, TVs and other distractions, burn some essential oils or incense and play some relaxing music. Get your recipient comfortable on an armchair, sofa or bed and make sure you are in a relaxed position to give. Keep a blanket or duvet ready in case your recipient gets cold lying/sitting still. A footbath feels deliciously indulgent but the feet can also be wiped with a cloth soaked in warm water with a few drops of lavender oil. When working on one foot, have a towel handy to cover the other one. Use a rich body lotion or cream without chemical nasties and get started with a foot massage. You can use your thumbs or fingers to apply pressure to the points but incorporate these into a general relaxing massage. Try starting the session by getting your partner to take some deep breaths, using the out breath to let go of tension. It is good to spend a few moments mentally preparing for the session yourself, focusing on your partner and setting your intention for a healing, beneficial treatment.



## FURTHER READING

- Healing Touch for Children: Massage, Acupressure and Reflexology Routines for Children by Mary Atkinson [tinyurl.com/healingtouchchildren](http://tinyurl.com/healingtouchchildren)
- Reflexology Chart [tinyurl.com/reflexologychart](http://tinyurl.com/reflexologychart)
- The Complete Illustrated Guide to Reflexology: Massage Your Way to Health and Well-Being by Beryl Crane [tinyurl.com/reflexologyguide](http://tinyurl.com/reflexologyguide)