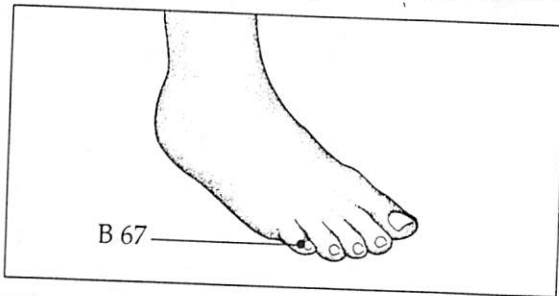


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LABOR, DELIVERY, AND NURSING

Jean, one of my main instructors at the Acupressure Institute, was working with a pregnant woman whose delivery was three weeks late. The mother had intermittent contractions: they would start up but then taper off. After Jean worked with the woman for thirty minutes, holding the trigger points on her hands and ankles, the contractions became more regular, and the mother actually felt the baby respond to the finger pressure; there was a tremendous increase in the baby's movements. Jean also showed the mother many self-acupressure points and techniques that gave her greater confidence during the labor and relief from the pain and exhaustion.



When B 67 on the mother's little toe was stimulated in the hospital, she felt the baby drop into position. The acupressure helped

the mother relax, and she was able to have more control of her pain during the birth.

Self-acupressure can greatly ease the stress and pain of childbirth without causing any of the side effects of drugs. Tension and fatigue tend to increase labor pain — the more you resist the pain, the stronger it gets — so relaxation is key to easing labor. Acupressure used with deep breathing releases muscle tension and helps you relax.

By pressing the restorative points illustrated in this chapter, you can boost your overall system during pregnancy, as well as prepare for the delivery. There are also several postpartum recovery points that relieve muscle soreness, stimulate lactation, and restore vitality after childbirth.

Participating in caring for yourself during labor builds the self-confidence you need to deal with the anxiety and fear that often arise. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of using acupressure during labor and delivery, however, is the deeper connection you feel not only to your own body, but also with your new baby.

Caution: You must call your doctor, midwife, and/or care coordinator when labor begins and be prepared to get to the hospital.



Potent Points for Relieving Labor Pain

Shoulder Well (GB 21)

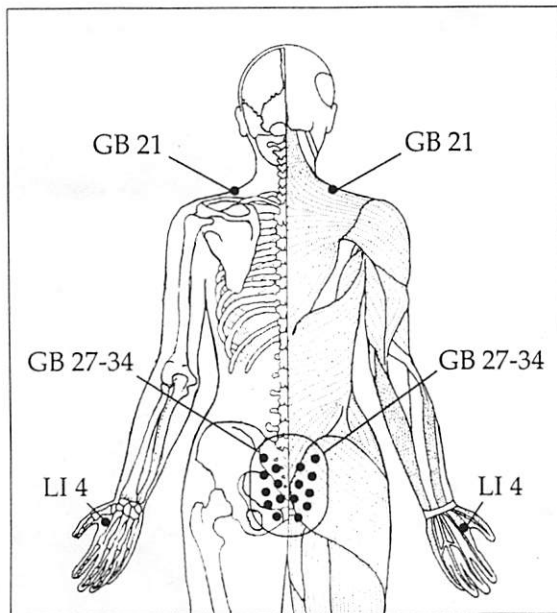
Caution: Do not apply harsh or sudden pressure on this point. Instead, gradually apply pressure on pregnant women.

Location: On the top of the shoulder, directly on the muscle, one to two inches out from the side of the lower neck.

Benefits: Assists childbirth and relieves pain, nervousness, irritability, fatigue, shoulder tension, poor circulation, cold hands and feet.

Sacral Points (B 27-B 34)

The acupressure points at the sacrum (the large bony area at the base of the spine) help relieve menstrual cramps, and lower-back and labor pain. Steady, firm pressure on these sacral points — by lying on your back with your hands, one on top of the other, under the base of the spine — helps relax the uterus and the pelvic area to relieve pain during labor.



■ You do not have to use all of these points. Using just one or two of them can be effective.

Joining the Valley (Hoku) (LI 4)

Location: In the webbing between the thumb and index finger at the highest spot of the muscle when the thumb and index finger are brought close together.

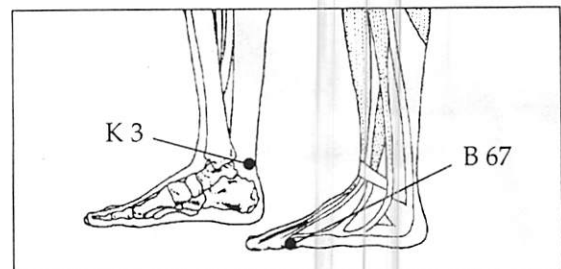
Benefits: Relieves labor pain, constipation, headaches, toothaches, shoulder pain, and arthritis.

Bigger Stream (K 3)

Caution: Do not stimulate this point strongly after the third month of pregnancy.

Location: Midway between the inner protrusions of the anklebone and the Achilles tendon in the back of the ankle.

Benefits: Relieves labor pain, swollen feet, fatigue, ankle pain, and back pain.



Reaching Inside (B 67)

Location: On the outside of the little toe, at the base of the toenail.

Benefits: Used for difficult labor, malposition of the fetus,⁴⁰ nasal obstruction, and itchy skin.

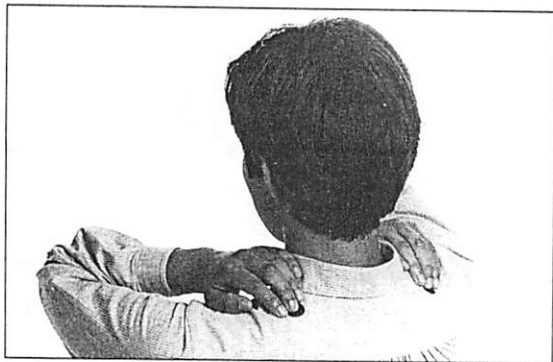
⁴⁰To prevent a breech birth, heat can be used on this trigger point to stimulate the fetus to change its position in the womb during the last trimester of the pregnancy. Consult with your physician and then with an acupressurist or acupuncturist for further details.

Potent Point Exercises for Labor Pain

The following routine can be practiced while sitting comfortably or lying down. It may be easier to stimulate the points on your feet in a sitting position. Concentrate on taking long, slow, deep breaths as you hold the following points on your body. Each of these acupressure techniques can be done by your partner, a friend, or your labor coach. The following instructions can be practiced in full as a complete routine or in part, combining just a couple of the steps.

Step 1

Gradually press GB 21: Curve your fingers, placing your fingertips directly on the muscle on the top of your shoulders close to your neck. Breathe deeply as you gradually press into any shoulder tension at this spot for one minute.



Step 2

Press or rub B 27-B 34: Press these points for delivery. Use the backs of your hands to briskly rub the base of your spine, creating warmth from the friction. If you can comfortably lie down on your back for a couple of minutes, place your hands one on top of the other, underneath the base of your spine. Bend your knees with your feet flat on



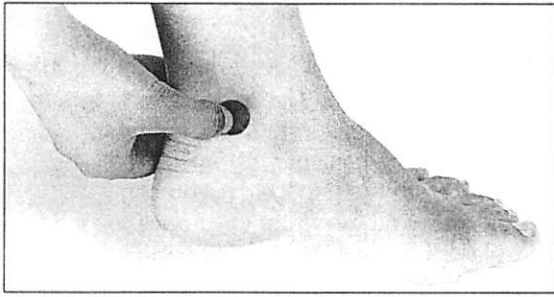
the bed. Breathe deeply as you slowly rock your pelvis left and right to stimulate these sacral points. This relaxes your pelvic region and encourages your cervix to dilate.

Step 3

Firmly press LI 4: Place your right thumb on the back of your left hand in the webbing between the thumb and index finger, with your fingertips on the palm directly behind your thumb. Squeeze the thumb and index finger of your right hand together to firmly press into the webbing. Angle the pressure underneath the bone that connects with the index finger. To expedite labor, stimulate the point by rubbing it; to relieve labor pain, grip the webbing firmer and hold it longer. Hold the point for one minute as you breathe deeply into your belly. Then switch sides to work on your other hand.



Labor Pain Relief Points: Show your labor coach or friend the following potent points.



Firmly press K 3: Bend your leg, placing your thumb between your inner anklebone and the Achilles tendon; press this point to ease labor pains. Hold one side at a time for a minute each, or reposition your body to hold both points simultaneously.



Stimulate B 67: Use the nail of your index finger to gently scratch B 67 on the outside of the nail of the little toe. Stimulate each side for thirty seconds.

Postpartum Recovery Potent Points

Sea of Energy (CV 6)

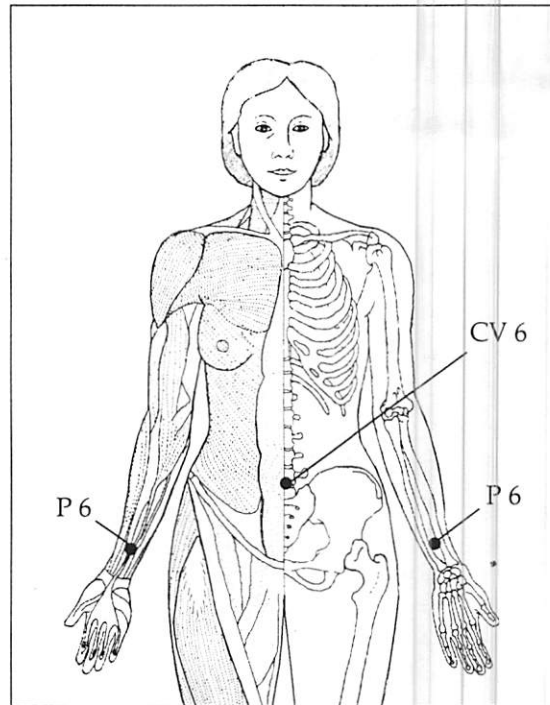
Location: Two finger widths below the belly button.

Benefits: Relieves weak abdominal muscles, lower-back pain, kidney pain, constipation, gas, uroreproductive problems, irregular vaginal discharge, general weakness, and insomnia.

Inner Gate (P 6)

Location: In the middle of the inner side of the forearm, two and one-half finger widths from the wrist crease.

Benefits: Relieves postpartum discomfort, insomnia, anxiety, palpitations, wrist pain, nausea, and indigestion.



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Sea of Vitality (B 23 and B 47)

Caution: Do not press on disintegrating discs or fractured or broken bones. If you have a weak back, a few minutes of stationary, light touching instead of pressure can be very healing. See your doctor first if you have any questions or need medical advice.

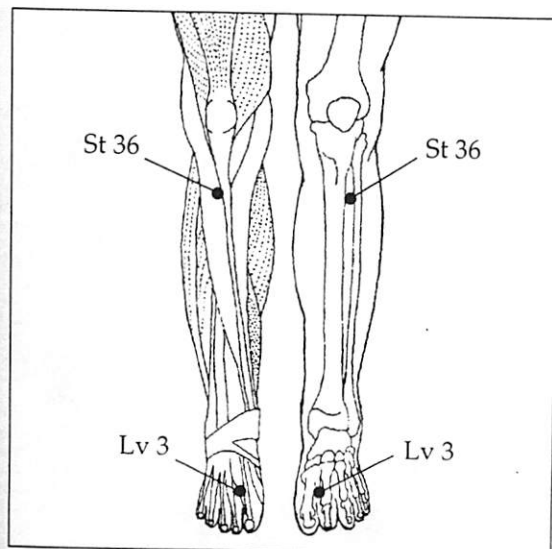
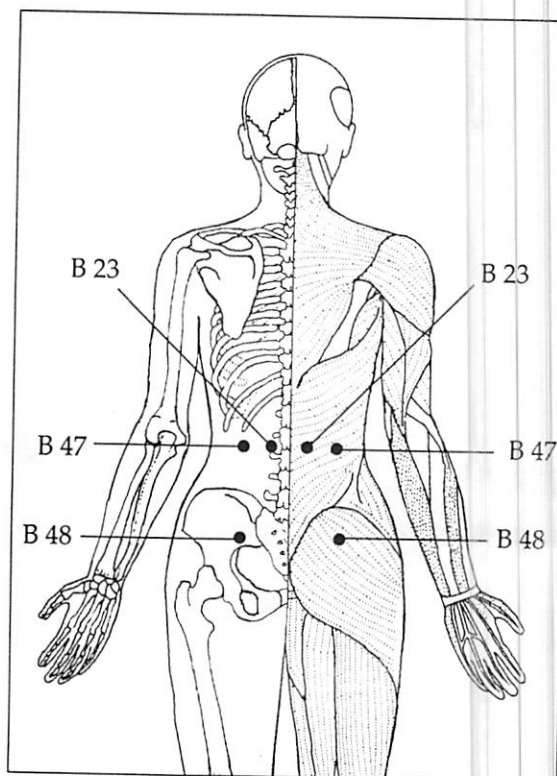
Location: On the lower back (between the second and third lumbar vertebrae), two and four finger widths away from the spine at waist level.

Benefits: Relieves postpartum discomfort, lower-back aches, fatigue, sexual-reproductive problems, impotency, irregular vaginal discharge, and urinary problems.

Womb and Vitals (B 48)

Location: One to two finger widths outside the large bony area at the base of the spine (sacrum) and midway between the top of the hipbone (iliac crest) and the base of the buttock.

Benefits: Relieves pelvic tension, bladder weakness, constipation, hemorrhoids, urinary problems, sciatica, lower backaches, hip pain, and frustration.

**Three Mile Point** (St 36)

Location: Four finger widths below the kneecap, one finger width outside of the shinbone. If you are on the correct spot, a muscle should flex as you move your foot up and down.

Benefits: Used for postpartum recovery, strengthens and tones the muscles, aids digestion, and relieves stomach disorders and fatigue.

Bigger Rushing (Lv 3)

Location: On the top of the foot, in the valley between the big toe and the second toe.

Benefits: Relieves continuous sweating that can occur after childbirth, cramps, headaches, and eye fatigue.

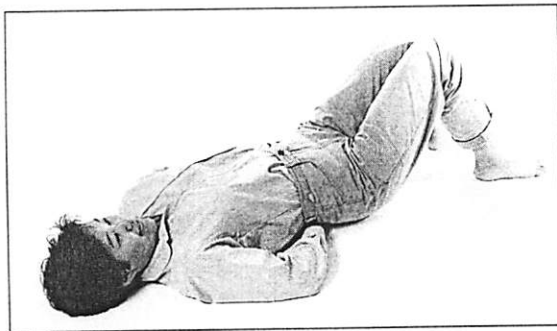
■ You do not have to use all of these points. Using just one or two of them whenever you have a free hand can be effective.

Potent Point Exercises for Postpartum Recovery

Lie down comfortably on your back or in the fetal position and take long, deep breaths as you hold the following points.

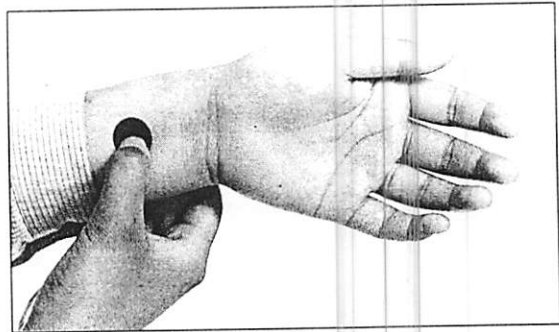
Step 1

Press B 23 and B 47: Make fists and place them under your lower back. Use your knuckles to press the thick, ropy muscles of your lower back at the level of your waist. This pressure stimulates both the inner lower back point B 23 and the outer point B 47 at the same time. Take long, slow, deep breaths into your abdomen for two minutes.



Step 2

Press B 48: Move your fists lower, underneath your buttocks, on either side of the base of your spine. As your knuckles press B 48, take long, deep breaths and let your head gently roll from side to side for one minute.

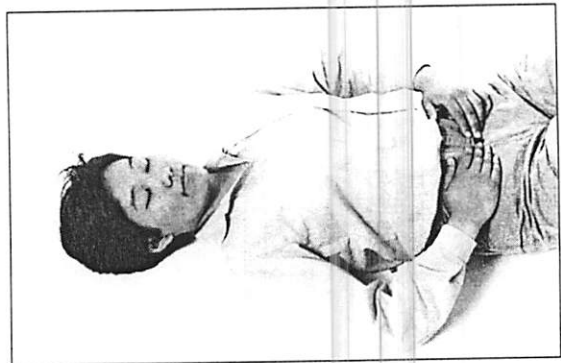


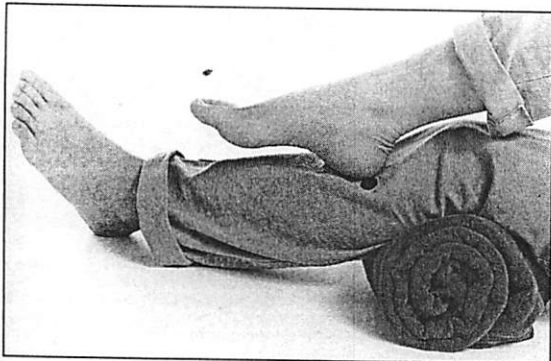
Step 3

Firmly press P 6: Place your right thumb on the inside of your wrist, two and one-half finger widths from the crease. Pressing firmly for thirty seconds. Then switch sides to press your other wrist.

Step 4

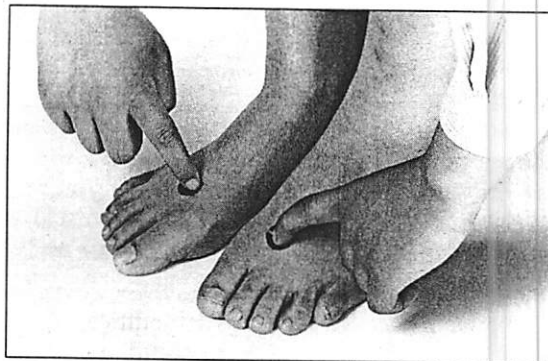
Firmly press CV 6: Place all of your fingertips into your lower abdominal area, between your belly button and pubic bone. Close your eyes and breathe deeply into this point for two minutes. Let yourself relax deeply after pressing CV 6; it's one of the most powerful postpartum recovery points. A short nap after pressing this point can be especially healing.





Step 5

Press St 36: Place your right heel on the left leg just outside and slightly below the kneecap. Press St 36 with your heel. After thirty seconds, do the same on your other leg. Take a minute to hold this potent point gently several times a day to strengthen your entire body after childbirth.



Step 6

Stimulate Lv 3: Slowly sit up, placing your fingertips or your opposite heel on the top of the foot in the valley between the bones that connect with the large and second toes. Firmly rub into the groove to stimulate Lv 3 on both sides for thirty seconds. Then lie down, close your eyes, and deeply relax.

Potent Points for Nursing

Letting Go (Lu 1)

Location: On the outer part of the chest, three finger widths below the collarbone. If you're on the right spot, you should feel the muscle bulge when you pull your arm into your body and tense the arm.

Benefits: Relieves breathing difficulties, fatigue, confusion, chest tension and congestion, emotional repression, coughing, and asthma.

Breast Window (St 16)

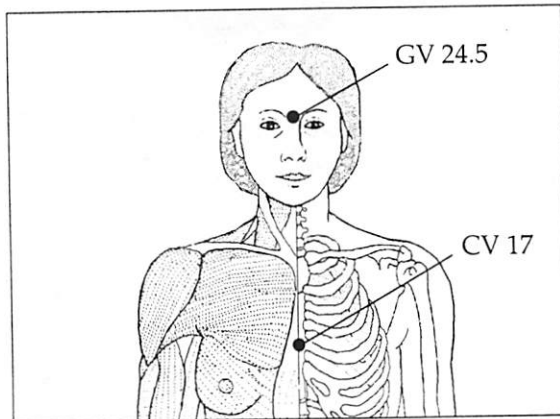
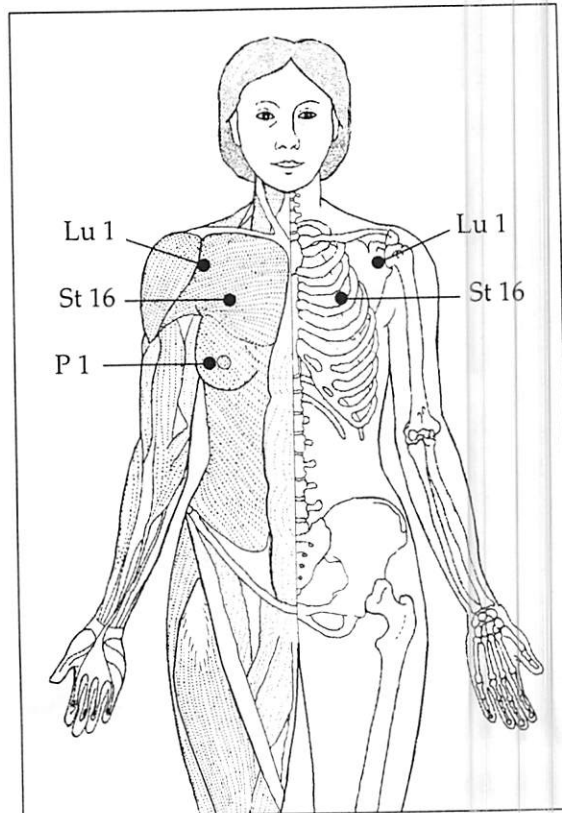
Location: Directly above the breast tissue in line with the nipples, between the third and fourth ribs.

Benefits: Relieves breast pains, lactation problems, heartburn, insomnia, depression, and chest congestion.

Heavenly Pond (P 1)

Location: One thumb width outside the nipple.

Benefits: Breast and chest pain, lymph glands, and insufficient milk during nursing.



■ You do not have to use all of these points. Using just one or two of them whenever you have a free hand can be effective.

Third Eye Point (GV 24.5)

Location: Directly between the eyebrows, in the indentation where the bridge of the nose meets the forehead.

Benefits: Used for breastfeeding difficulties, glandular imbalances; also relieves hay fever, headaches, indigestion, ulcer pain, and eyestrain.

Sea of Tranquility (CV 17)

Location: On the center of the breastbone three thumb widths up from the base of the bone.

Benefits: Relieves nervousness, chest congestion, insomnia, anguish, depression, hysteria, and other emotional imbalances.

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Potent Point Exercises

The following acupressure routine can be practiced either sitting or lying down comfortably.

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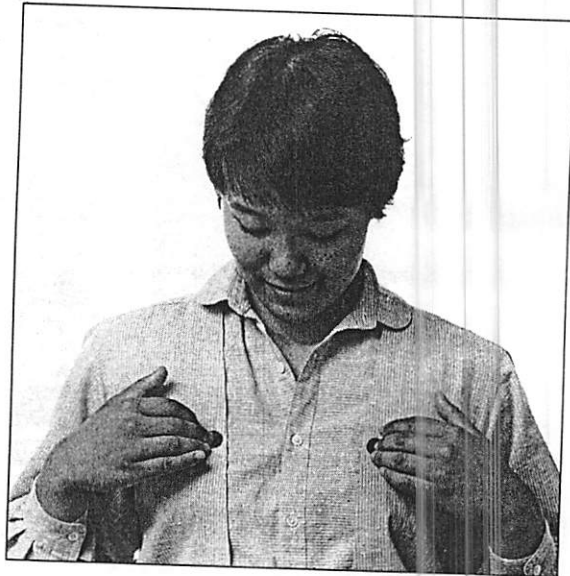
Press Lu 1: Curve your fingers and place your right fingertips on the upper, outer portion of the left side of your chest, and your left fingertips on the right side of your chest.



Make firm contact with the muscles located four finger widths up and one finger width inward from your armpit crease as you breathe deeply, holding for one minute with your eyes closed.

Step 2

Lightly press St 16: Place your middle fingertips just above the breast on the nipple line to feel for a sore, tender spot. Hold this point for one minute as you breathe deeply.



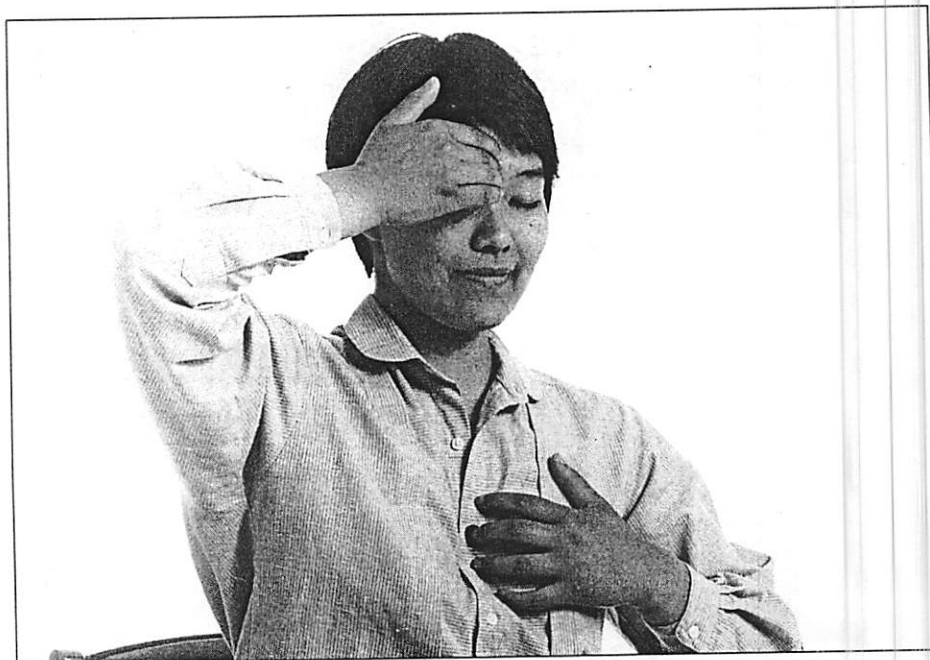
Step 3

Lightly press P 1: Place your fingertips beside your nipple to lightly hold P 1 for one minute on both sides. Please note that this step is not shown here. For an illustration of P 1 please refer to the previous page.

Step 4

Hold GV 24.5 along with CV 17: Place the third fingertip of your right hand lightly on the Third Eye Point, between your eyebrows. Use your left fingertips to hold CV 17, at the

center of your breastbone. Close your eyes and take long, slow, deep breaths for one to two minutes to calm, nourish, and relax yourself and bask in your own healing.



Additional Points for Labor, Delivery, and Nursing

For illustrations of other related points for relieving labor and delivery pain, see chapter 36, "Pregnancy and Infertility."

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