



BRING IT ON!

So you're way past your due date and you want to start things rolling before the docs take over? Which methods may actually work and which ones are myth?

TAKING CASTOR OIL: Traditionally used as a laxative, castor oil causes intestinal cramping and diarrhoea. Dehydration is another charming side effect, plus it tastes foul. Avoid.

EATING A CURRY/FRESH PINEAPPLE/LICORICE: There is no scientific proof that these foods will induce labour but they may get your digestive tract moving, which could lead to contractions. If you can't do without your vindaloo, be prepared for heartburn, loose bowels or a baby!

RASPBERRY LEAF TEA: This nutrient-rich herb tones the muscles of the uterus, but one cuppa won't induce labour. Research suggests that drinking the tea from the 32nd week of pregnancy may help ease contractions, and sipping after birth helps shrink the uterus back to normal size and reduce bleeding. Don't drink the tea if you're having a caesarean or if you have other medical issues. Always consult your LMC.

WALKING: It's good for fitness but if you're not in labour, a long stroll will just make you tired. Once contractions start, walking may help pull the baby near the birth canal.

SEX/NIPPLE STIMULATION: If you're up for it, go for it. Stimulation and orgasm produces oxytocin, which can help to contract the uterus. The prostaglandins in sperm also soften the cervix in preparation for labour.

ACUPRESSURE: Get yourself and your birth support partner clued up on labour-inducing acupressure points on the body. Stimulating these specific points on your hands, ankles, lower legs, shoulders and back can also ease pain during labour.

Cramping your style?

Tummy cramps during pregnancy can be painful, but don't worry, in most cases it's just your ligaments stretching to make room for your growing uterus. Try lying down and putting your feet up. A hot water bottle or wheat bag on the cramp may help, or even a warm bath. If you can walk it off, do. If there is heavy spotting/vomiting/fever as well, call your LMC immediately. Serious cramps may be a symptom of an early miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy. Cramp or backache during sex can also happen - in this case, soft and slow wins the race.

10%

of women develop gestational diabetes during pregnancy. If untreated, GD can cause your baby to have low blood sugar, jaundice, breathing problems or be born large. Between 24 and 28 weeks of pregnancy, you will be screened for GD. If positive, your doctor will devise a meal plan to keep your blood glucose in the target range, suggest an exercise programme and prescribe insulin if needed. In most cases, GD goes away after childbirth, however, you and your baby are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes in later life. Maintaining a healthy body weight can prevent or delay an onset of diabetes.

Pregnancy & birth

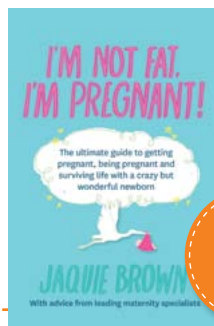
By Frances Chan

Mothering the mother

A doula provides non-medical support during pregnancy. She is trained to look after your emotional and physical needs, and may use techniques such as massage, visualisation and breathing to help you through labour. Studies show having a doula present at birth reduces the rates of having a caesarean, an epidural and pain medication by up to 60 percent. *Doulas: Why Every Pregnant Woman Deserves One* (Akasha Books, \$32.99), by Australian midwife Susan Ross, provides in-depth information and case studies on the benefits of doulas for mothers and their partners.

GUIDANCE AND GIGGLES

Be informed and have a laugh about your pregnancy at the same time. Actress and broadcaster Jaquie Brown offers an entirely relevant read for Kiwi mums-to-be. *I'm Not Fat, I'm Pregnant* (Random House, \$45) is an impressive tome of week-by-week pregnancy info, real-life stories, expert



opinion from New Zealand maternity specialists and extracts from Brown's pregnancy diary. Her reliable advice with a humorous edge includes cures for morning sickness, cellulite on cellulite and 'angry poo'. We have five copies of *I'm Not Fat, I'm Pregnant* to give away. Just email treatme-LT@acpmagazines.co.nz with 'Jaquie Brown' in the subject line by 25 May and include your name, address and phone number.

5 to give away!