Childbirth Made Easier

What you need to KNOW

By Mary Aspinwall, RSHom, PCH

My first child was born when I knew just a little about homeopathy. Even so, I had prepared some odd bottles of homeopathic remedies with weird little notes stuck to them, explaining when the remedies might be useful during childbirth. After a grueling 60-hour labor, I asked if someone could get a suction pump to lure the baby's head out. I had decided enough already with natural childbirth! There was a pump somewhere, but no one was quite sure how to use it. They had forceps. Suddenly, my resolve returned at the sight of them, and I finally remembered my handful of homeopathic remedies with their "Alice in Wonderland" labels! I took one dose of *Pulsatilla* 200c because the label said "Weepy—Help me!" and one dose of *Arnica* 200c, "For second wind," and to everyone's astonishment, especially mine, our child was born within two minutes.

A couple of years later, I designed a homeopathic birth kit, which has been available ever since. It's one of four kits I put together, and it's probably the one I am most proud of because of the profound difference homeopathy can make to birthing experiences and the auspicious beginning it can bring to a child's life. I squeezed the most vital homeopathic birth information into an easy-to-follow leaflet, chose 18 of the most frequently needed birth remedies in 200c potency, and stuck them into a bright yellow box. I hoped to encourage more women to turn to homeopathy and ease the often-challenging passage of new lives into this world. To learn more, visit remedyseeker.com/childbirth-guide and homeopathykits.com.

That was the early 1990s. Fast forward to the late '90s, and there were thousands of birth kits worldwide, and I was very happy to have one. At 11:14 p.m. on Saturday 30th January 1999, our second child was born at our home—a barn in West Cork, Ireland. He was delivered in a birthing pool after a fast and feral labor, most of which I spent howling at the full moon.

During this labor, I needed *Kali carbonicum* 200c for backache labor and later for after-pains; both times, the clue was the need for firm pressure on my lumbar area, and both times the remedy

offered relief. I also needed *Aconite* 200c because this labor was at the opposite extreme—fast and furious—from my first labor experience, and *Aconite* can offer calm during violent or fast labor. I also used *Bryonia* 30c from my blue family kit on the third day after the birth to ward off mastitis. *Bryonia* is a great match if the breast is pale and excruciatingly painful with the slightest motion, and, yes, it helped.

Empowered by experiences

About six years ago, I was asked to teach a study group online, and now, I'm happy to say our group is over 40,000 members strong (www.facebook.com/groups/study-homeopathy). There are many wonderful posts on the group; search for #birth and #successstory. It makes me so happy that people are empowering themselves to have the births they want by sharing their experiences with others and taking the time during pregnancy to study how homeopathy can support them. As I was writing this article, I reached out to some of our group members, who kindly agreed to share their birth success stories here, too.

Opening up with *Gelsemium*

One night, when the online group had only been going for a few months, I was up late and happened to see a post from a mother-to-be thousands of miles away. She was having stop-and-start labor and had already tried *Arnica* (because she was very tired) and *Pulsatilla* (because she was weepy and missing her partner); however, neither remedy helped the labor move forward. Her cervix was not softening and had dilated very little. She was anxious because her partner could not be with her, and the person who had come to help care for her other children could not stay much longer as the birth was "overdue." She felt under pressure to perform and was in a "rabbit in the headlights" state. I suggested she read about *Gelsemium* 200c since it can be helpful when someone is experiencing anticipatory/performance anxiety and helps the cervix to open. The next day she wrote, "Immediately after taking *Gelsemium*, my water broke, and strong contractions began." Her healthy son was born soon afterward.

Perfect positioning with *Pulsatilla*

Another mother shared, "I was in labor at home with a midwife, a doula, and their assistants. I had been laboring for about two, maybe three hours, when it was clear the baby

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was in a posterior position. I had terrible back pain and was losing control of my legs from the pressure. My midwife gave me *Pulsatilla* 200c, and with the next contraction, the baby completely flip-flopped—and it was fairly smooth sailing from there." – *Rivkah Holland*

Pulsatilla is known for helping to turn babies, and we have heard many more success stories from people who took *Pulsatilla* 200c at week 36, and their babies moved from a breech or transverse position into a head-down birth position. Both my babies were in transverse positions, happily treating me as a hammock, and each time, *Pulsatilla* 200c moved them into a head-down, labor-ready position in under an hour.

Match-it success

Here's another success story shared by a "Match It Mama": "Last Monday, I had our fourth child during a planned home birth (my first home birth). My water slowly began to leak at 2:30 a.m., and mild contractions started around 6 a.m. My midwife arrived at 8 a.m., and by 9:30 a.m., she asked if I had any "tricks" to help advance labor. I thought of *Caulophyllum* because it matched my situation—weak contractions and a failing-to-progress, stop-and-start labor.

"I took one dose of *Caulophyllum* 200c and began walking around. By 10:30 a.m., labor was progressing well, and I was eight centimeters dilated. Baby Boy joined us Earthside at 11:54 a.m.

"After the baby was born, my symptoms matched with *Arnica*. *Arnica* is excellent for physical exhaustion, bruising, and trauma and can help reduce post-partum blood loss. I also selected it to help me urinate after birth, as *Arnica* can be helpful for urine retention after childbirth.

"Very shortly after taking it, I was up and urinating. Everyone was impressed with how fast I was recovering and how quickly labor began progressing after a very slow start.

"A few days later, I had a deep pain in my lower tailbone region. The pain would pulsate, then travel up my back to my neck. I let the first attack pass, but later in the day, I had another. I looked up my symptoms, and they matched *Hypericum*, which is helpful for pain that travels along nerves. I took a dose and have not had an issue since.

What to do when things get *tough*

- Use ***Aconite*** if you or your baby are frightened.
- Use ***Cimicifuga*** if you have a terrible sense of foreboding.
- Use ***Carbo vegetabilis*** if you or your baby turn blue or seem at risk.

"Thank you, Mary and all the Marvels (moderators) who have given me the empowerment to trust in my body and the education to provide gentle support to help my body do what it needs to do." – *Anon*

Use as needed

"When I was 41 weeks pregnant with my second child and patiently waiting for her to make an appearance, I was suddenly unable to walk or even lie down without having sharp pains. I limped to my midwife's office, and, after examining me, she said that I had "lightning crotch." [Lightning crotch is a common third-trimester occurrence when the baby grows bigger and, in response, the mother's body naturally relaxes to prepare for birth. Unfortunately, this can cause sharp shooting pains in the vagina and pelvis.] My midwife said there was nothing I could do to ease the pain.

"After a few more days of struggling, I remembered Mary's yellow birth kit and Miranda Castro's book, *Mother and Baby: Pregnancy, Birth and Your Baby's First Years*. After reviewing the kit's leaflet and Miranda's book, I matched my symptoms to *Bellis perennis*, a helpful remedy for deep abdominal bruising, sciatica, and sleeplessness caused by the baby's position or its kicking. I took one dose of *Bellis perennis* 200c at 11 p.m.; by morning, I was nearly pain-free and able to move around!

"The following week, I labored for an intense three and a half hours, and although I had my birth kit nearby, I didn't need to take any remedies. After the birth, I used *Arnica* 200c and *Bellis perennis* 200c for recovery, and, within one week, my body had healed, and my uterus had contracted back down. My midwife was astonished at how quickly I recovered.

"My advice for expectant mothers and their birth partners: study the birth kit leaflet to be prepared to use a homeopathic remedy if needed. However, trust in the body's ability to birth, and avoid taking unnecessary remedies." – *Laura McNair*

Natural support for labor and delivery

"I had elevated blood pressure associated with pre-eclampsia, so my doctor wanted to induce labor. I was in the hospital, scared and worried about how the induction and labor would go, so I took three doses of *Arsenicum album* 200c in water. Soon after, my blood pressure normalized, and my doctor allowed me to go home from the hospital to rest. My blood pressure stayed normal, so it was much later when I returned to the hospital to give birth. The birth was hard and fast, so I took *Arnica* to make me more comfortable and *Aconite* to keep me calm. When my daughter was born, she had trouble breathing, and we rubbed *Carbo vegetabilis* in water on her ankles. In about 15 minutes, her breathing regulated, and the nurse brought her to my room!

"After the birth of my son, I started bleeding profusely, both vaginally and through an IV port that my hospital nurse had placed in my arm before delivery. I started feeling weak and dizzy, so I took *Carbo vegetabilis* [for weakness] and *Phosphorus* [to stop the bleeding]. Soon after, the bleeding stopped, and I could rest and heal!

"Before the birth of my next son, I used Bach Rescue Remedy® to help me relax and prepare for delivery. After the dose, I peacefully slept until I needed to start pushing. He was born quickly, and I needed stitches. The remedy *Calendula* [not to be confused with *Calendula* tincture or topical ointment] and *Arnica* in my water bottle helped with the suture pain and vaginal healing." – *Anon*

Easier placenta delivery with *Secale*

"My biggest birthing success with homeopathy happened when I used *Secale* 200c before delivering the placenta. The yellow birthing kit leaflet mentioned that *Secale* could help with placenta delivery if contractions are too weak to push it out naturally. After I took the remedy, the placenta practically fell out." – *Anon*

Third time's the charm

"I had had issues with my placenta not coming out on its own for my first two births. When I thought about my symptoms and mental state during and after the second birth, I realized that *Pulsatilla* would probably have helped me. I had felt whiny and weepy, wanting my husband nearby, even in the birthing pool with me, and my son's head was born transverse, facing my leg instead of my back, all symptoms that matched *Pulsatilla*.

"For my third birth, I was ready! I took *Arnica* and *Pulsatilla* immediately after delivery because both remedies matched my symptoms during previous births. Also, Florida home birth regulations only allow 30 minutes after birth to deliver the placenta before the mother must go to the hospital. The placenta came out easily on its own less than 10 minutes after I took *Pulsatilla*. I felt incredibly triumphant with that success because it allowed my post-partum period to be much more peaceful than it had been with the previous two." *– Raquel Schneider*

Old trauma resolves, cervix opens

"During my first, very fast birth, I tore from my vagina to my anus. As I wanted to breastfeed and usually have bad reactions to anesthesia, I asked for no anesthesia. I was treated brusquely in the delivery room, and the experience was painful and quite upsetting. I didn't know about homeopathy at the time. To make matters worse, I was separated from my baby, put into stirrups, and left there for a long time. Afterward, I carried a lot of buried anger and frustration about this experience.

"When I was six centimeters dilated with my second baby, I felt pressure on my cervix, and the feeling triggered terrible memories from my first birth experience. My cervix then completely locked and would not dilate any further. Fortunately, I had since learned about homeopathy and had my yellow birth kit with me. I took *Staphysagria* 200c, as it was the perfect match for my reawakened suppressed anger and past feelings of violation. It was miraculous! I was fully dilated to 10 centimeters just 15 minutes after the remedy dose, and our son was born." *– Anon*

Homeopathy saved my tush

"After my third birth, I developed painful hemorrhoids that obstructed my stool and made it impossible to sit, hold my baby, or nurse him without lying on my side. My midwife suggested various natural therapies, which did not help, and my doctors advised me to have surgery to remove the hemorrhoids. I decided to contact Mary, and she suggested a remedy not commonly used for hemorrhoids based on all my symptoms. [Homeopaths follow the homeopathic principle known as *Totality of Symptoms* to select a remedy that matches an individual's unique group of physical, mental, and emotional symptoms.]

"After taking the remedy, I had a very strong urge to apologize to my mother for my rude and ungrateful behavior. As I apologized, I realized I was sitting comfortably for the first time in weeks! I held my baby, nursed him upright, burped him myself, and snuggled him to sleep. Homeopathy likely saved our entire breastfeeding relationship. It definitely saved my tush!" *– Anon*

My go-to hemorrhoid remedies include the following:

- *Nux vomica* can help with hemorrhoids caused by straining during birth. It often helps reduce irritability, too. A bonus is that it can also reduce side effects from pain relief medications.
- *Sepia* is another good choice for hemorrhoids during pregnancy. This indifferent and withdrawn mom is usually exhausted and has heavy, dragging pains that make her want to bear down.
- *Lachesis* can help when hemorrhoids appear during the first month of pregnancy. The mother typically cannot tolerate tightness, such as high collars around her neck or tight pants around her abdomen. She often feels worse at night, after waking, or after eating.

Premature lungs spontaneously heal

Evie was a huge help with the Facebook study group, so when her son was born four weeks early, I was happy to help. After a home birth, Evie's son started to show signs of distress, and then he stopped breathing and turned blue. The midwife performed infant CPR to revive him, and on the way to the hospital, Evie gave *Carbo vegetabilis*—a remedy that matched the baby's weakness and difficulty in breathing.

At the hospital, Evie's son was sedated, intubated, put on a ventilator, and given a dose of surfactant, a substance normally secreted by the lungs that makes breathing easier. Next, he went by helicopter to a pediatric hospital, and Evie and her husband followed by car. Initially, Evie and I tried many remedies that helped a little, but the X-rays showed "significant lung disease." The lead nurse suspected that he had a hole in his lower left lung. Later, the doctor told Evie that he was pretty sure her son had surfactant B deficiency—without surfactant in the lungs, the air sacs collapse, and the infant cannot breathe normally.

Mary's Pre-Birth Recommendations

- **OBTAIN** a birth remedy kit by the start of your third trimester in case you need a remedy before the birth.
- **READ** and ask anyone attending the birth to also read the birth kit leaflet from start to finish, so everyone is ready to grab the birth kit if needed during labor.
- **ASK** your homeopath to be on standby during your labor to help you select a remedy if the situation becomes complex.

Distressed to hear the poor prognosis, I did some further repertorizing and selected *Calcarea phosphorica (Calc phos)* 200c. *Calc phos* is an important remedy for premature babies, especially if their lungs can't expand properly. It has a particular affinity with the lower left lung, where the nurse had suspected a hole. About seven hours after Evie gave her son the remedy, a new X-ray showed "significant spontaneous improvement" in his lungs, especially in his lower left lung. In addition, his breathing rates decreased to almost normal levels for the first time since arriving at the hospital.

The doctor was encouraged by the baby's progress, but a later X-ray showed that the upper right lung had started to collapse. With this new information, we changed the remedy to *Arsenicum album* 200c. *Arsenicum* is also helpful for newborns who cannot expand their lungs and has an affinity with the upper right lung. After the dose of *Arsenicum*, the baby needed less oxygen support.

I'm delighted to say that Evie's son returned home only two weeks after the doctor's dire prognosis, and now, years later, he is still doing well.

Constitutional care halted early labor

"Most of my homeopathy successes have come from having constitutional care [homeopathic care of the whole person to enhance overall health] with Mary as my homeopath. Four weeks before my fifth child was due, I went into early labor and felt like I wanted to bear down and push. My symptoms matched *Sepia*, which stopped the early labor, and I carried the baby to full term.

"During my sixth pregnancy, I didn't experience any early labor, which I attribute to the doses of *Sepia* I had taken with my previous child's birth. In my first four pregnancies, I had gone into early labor anywhere from four days to four weeks before my due date, so *Sepia* really helped me carry my fifth and sixth children to full term." – *Anon*

VBAC victory

"Thank you to this group. My mother gifted me the yellow birth kit for Christmas. I was able to successfully VBAC [vaginal birth after cesarean], and I used the kit before, during, and after labor and delivery!

"During pregnancy, I mostly used *Bellis perennis* 200c for groin pain.

"I feared being unable to have a VBAC, especially since the obstetrics office pressured me to deliver on time or have a repeat c-section. I took *Cimicifuga* 200c because I was so apprehensive and afraid, but my cervix did not dilate past one centimeter after 24 hours of early labor.

"I left the hospital, went home to rest, and reread the birth kit leaflet, deciding to take *Gelsemium* 200c because it matched my worries about being able to give birth 'on time.' After the dose, my contractions quickly kicked into high gear, and my husband took me back to the hospital, where I discovered that I was dilated to four centimeters. From there, my labor and delivery rapidly progressed.

"After a successful delivery, I used *Arnica* for the bruising and *Bellis perennis* for tail bone bruising from an aggravated old injury. I also had stitches, so I took *Calendula, Hypericum* (also good for the tail bone), and *Staphysagria*. Twenty-four hours after the birth, my swelling and pain from the stitches were nearly non-existent." – *Rachel Newsome*

Some parting thoughts

For over 200 years, homeopaths have recorded their clinical experiences to document which remedies have successfully helped their clients in all sorts of situations, including pregnancy and childbirth. We use this information to select a perfectly matching remedy. Homeopathy is all about the match, which is why you need a broad range of remedies on hand. See *Mary's Pre-Birth Recommendations* on page 42.

I wish you all joyful births and leave you with these beautiful words from *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran.

Your Children
Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.
You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In the early 1990s, Mary designed four internationally best-selling homeopathy kits, including one for birth. She has spent the past 28 years educating the public about Homeopathy and holistic approaches to health through her magazine articles, videos, websites, and online courses. For the past six years, she has run "Mary's Homeopathy Study Group" on Facebook with over 40,000 enthusiastic and supportive members who share their love of this amazing healing art. Find free educational resources at www.maryaspinwall.com/resources.