

# Moxibustion

## Information Leaflet

### Introduction

Birth is most likely to be straightforward if your baby has their head downwards (cephalic) at the start of labour. Most babies who are in a bottom down (breech) position will naturally turn to the head down position by 36-37 weeks. After this time they may turn by themselves but this becomes less likely.

If your baby is in the breech position after 36 weeks and this is your first baby, or 37 weeks and it is a subsequent pregnancy, you might choose for a doctor to try to turn your baby by hand (External Cephalic Version or ECV). Prior to this you might also want to try moxibustion from 34 weeks.

### What is moxibustion?

This is a traditional Chinese therapy using herbal moxa sticks made from dried mugwort. The sticks are lit and held close to the acupuncture points on your feet to give a gentle heat. This is thought to increase the baby's movements, enabling them to move into a head down position.

Research evidence suggests that moxibustion, when combined with the use of postural techniques (described below), is safe and increases your chance of baby turning from a breech position

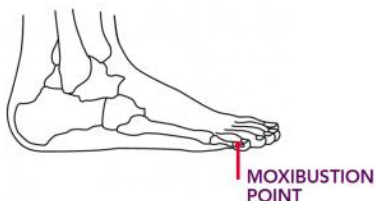
### What does moxibustion involve?

The midwife will give you some moxa sticks to use at home, explaining how to light them and place them next to the

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acupuncture points on your little toes, close enough to feel pleasantly warm, but not enough to feel uncomfortable or to burn the skin.



This will probably be easier if you can get your partner, another family member or a friend to help you so that you can use the moxa sticks on both feet at the same time.

You will need to use moxibustion twice a day for seven days for ten minutes each time (morning and evening).

Research has shown that moxibustion is most likely to work when the pregnant person also spends ten minutes twice a day in what is called the 'knee chest position'. This is demonstrated in the picture below.



If you choose to do moxibustion, you will also have a follow-up scan to check the baby's position around a week later.

### **Can everyone have moxibustion?**

For most pregnant people moxibustion is thought to be a safe choice; however, there are some situations where your midwife or doctor would advise against it, e.g. if your baby is not growing well, if your placenta is low lying, if you have had bleeding from your vagina, if you have had a previous caesarean section or if your waters have broken. An ECV is not advised for the same reasons.

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## Are there any side effects or risks?

- As far as we know there are no serious safety concerns
- It may cause some mild contractions
- It is not uncommon for the baby to become more active for a few hours following treatments

## Moxibustion in use

- Be careful to hold the moxa sticks a little bit away from your skin to make sure you don't burn yourself
- The moxa sticks will produce a slight odour so it is best to do it in a room with good ventilation, or even outside
- Please ensure that lit moxa sticks are not left unattended and are fully extinguished before disposal as they could be the source of ignition for a house fire

**If you have any queries regarding this procedure please contact the Antenatal Clinic on 01892 633044.**

## What if it doesn't work?

Research has shown that moxibustion combined with helpful postural techniques (explained above) is successful in turning about 1 in 8 (12%) of breech babies.

If your baby is still in the breech position, when you attend your appointment at 36-37 weeks, we will offer you the chance to have a doctor try to turn your baby by hand. Please ask to see the ECV information leaflet for more details on this option.


**We are pleased to offer the moxibustion treatment free of charge; however, any donation to help cover the £10 cost of the herbal moxa sticks would be gratefully received.**

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## Further information and advice can be obtained from:

**NHS 111**

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**NHS Choices online**

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)


**Tunbridge Wells Hospital at  
Pembury Maternity Triage**

 01892 633500

**Antenatal Clinic**

 01892 633044.

**Maidstone Birth Centre**


 01622 220160/1

**Crowborough Birth Centre**

 01892 654080

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Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

**Telephone:**  01622 224960 or  01892 632953

**Email:** [mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net](mailto:mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net)

**or visit their office** at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: [www.mtw.nhs.uk](http://www.mtw.nhs.uk) or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

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