

## Preparing for Birth Balancing Mind, Body and Bowl

**Julian Keel** shares some of the advice he gives to his patients on preparing for birth.

**As a chiropractor and cranial therapist with special interest in pregnancy and paediatrics, I often get asked about preparing for birth. In this article, I will be sharing some of the advice I give to my patients.**

My field of work embraces a holistic paradigm and due attention is placed on physical, chemical and emotional well-being – the ‘triad’ of health.

### Physical

I deal with the frame of the body and its effect on the nervous system. Good alignment is of great importance for the pelvic structures and supporting muscles and ligaments and their impact on the growing baby and pregnant mother. Early detection and treatment is always a good objective. I do not believe anyone should accept back pain, sciatica, pubic pain or hip pain as normal.

### Exercise

Half hour daily walks. Gentle flexibility and strengthening exercises, such as pregnancy yoga or pilates. ‘Active Birth’ classes are excellent. Aqua classes are also a great form of exercise, particularly in the last few months.

### Are you sitting comfortably?

Sitting is not great for pregnancy. It tends to ‘close’ the pelvis by shortening the distance between the pelvic floor and respiratory diaphragm. Try to sit with knees below the level of your hips, either at the front edge of a chair that can be raised up or preferably on a chair with a forward-tilt option. Getting up and moving around often is key – especially if you have a desk job. Sitting on an armless, backed-chair, ‘cowboy style’ – so that you’re leaning forward against the chair-

back, astride the seat - is a great position to sit and eat, work etc.

Unfortunately, car seats are not designed with pregnant women in mind. Try placing a small cushion under your bottom to tilt you so you have a more ‘open’ position for your pelvis and to raise the hips above knee level.

### Chemical

This refers to our nutritional needs. Apart from the obvious advice of an alcohol-free, good balanced diet, low in refined sugars, I would recommend the more superior brands of pre-natal nutritional products by Solgar or Biocare, to safely supplement the diet. Their multi-mineral/vitamin preparations are better absorbed and utilised by the body. I also recommend a good quality fish-oil preparation, (such as Eskimo 3 or MorDHA that use oils free of pollutants), to help foetal brain and nervous system development and help with the mother’s mood, memory, metabolism and immune system.

### Emotional

I believe awareness of emotional health is an essential aspect of a good pregnancy and birth. Prolonged or severe stress can have an influence on your baby - stress hormones and chemicals produced by the mother cross the placenta, influencing a baby’s long-term personality by placing her into ‘survival mode’.

Sometimes stress is unavoidable. How you deal with stress is important. Make sure you get support, whether from friends, family or professionally.

Developing a bond with your unborn baby, conveying your acceptance and anticipation of meeting her, gaining confidence

through knowledge of the birth journey, being comfortable with the people and surroundings of your chosen place of birth, will all help reduce fear of the unknown and aid production of oxytocin – the hormone of birth, love and bonding.

It’s a very special privilege to be able to play a part in a very important life-changing experience, and I hope my advice and assistance can help add to that of the NCT classes that I always recommend to my patients.

**Dr Julian Keel BSc DC  
Doctor of Chiropractic**

A Richmond branch NCT member, Julian Keel is a registered chiropractor practising locally in South West London and offering chiropractic and cranial treatment for adults, babies and children. As well as an extensive sports injury and general rehabilitation background, Julian specialises in the care of the mother pre and post natally and the health of babies and children.

