

Chiropractic Care and Dystocia



by Dr. Adam Glassman

Chiropractic care can help patients in many different ways, from wellness care through pain relief, but an often overlooked area is the expectant mom. Chiropractic can help prevent dystocia in pregnancy. Dystocia is defined as a failure to progress which

can be through either a lack of dilation in a normal timeframe or a lack of fetal descent. Dystocia is the MOST common reason for c-sections in the U.S. accounting for nearly half of all c-sections. There are four main reasons for dystocia and below I will discuss its relevance to Chiropractic.

First, uterine forces are insufficiently strong or inappropriately coordinated to efface and dilate the cervix properly. From a Chiropractic perspective, our biggest concern is the innervation of the reproductive musculature including the uterus and other supporting ligaments and tissues. The reproductive system is controlled by our autonomic nervous system and specifically the parasympathetic and even more specifically the S2 and S3 nerves. It is common for a woman to begin labor and delivery in a hospital setting under a complete sympathetic overdrive. When the sympathetics are excitatory and firing it inhibits the parasympathetic nerve supply within the body and especially to that area. By utilizing certain techniques such as Logan and cranio-sacral, it begins the stimulation of the parasympathetic nerve system thus inhibiting the sympathetics. There are recommendations in addition to adjusting which you could make, which include allowing the patient to walk around during labor or allowing them to consume clear fluids or broths.

Secondly, the diameter of the woman's pelvis is decreased when the sacrum is displaced/subluxated. This is the perfect tie-in for Chiropractic care. If the sacrum is displaced, then it is necessary to adjust the sacrum and possibly other parts of the pelvis. Sacrum will commonly subluxate either posterior on the right, left or as a BP sacrum. By correcting the posteriority of the sacrum, it will increase diameter of the pelvis thus decreasing dystocia.

When adjusting the sacrum on a pregnant patient, it is common to utilize the Webster Analysis, but either way, the sacrum should be the first bone analyzed in a pregnant patient because of the amount of neural input it has to the reproductive organs as well as being the foundation to the spine. When adjusting the sacrum it is important NOT to cause rotation during the adjustment and the adjustment should be a straight P-A thrust.

The third reason for dystocia is the abnormalities of presentation, position or development of the fetus. Again, this is where the Webster Technique is utilized. The Webster Technique is not a breech baby turning technique to be confused with an ECV or any other obstetrics maneuver, but a system of analysis and correction unique to chiropractic. The I.C.P.A. defines the Webster technique as a specific chiropractic analysis and adjustment that reduces interference to the nervous system and balances maternal pelvic muscles and ligaments. This in turn reduces torsion in the uterus, a cause of intra-uterine constraint of the baby, and allows for optimal fetal positioning in preparation for birth. Usually the cause of this malposition is the imbalance of the muscles and the tension on the ligaments, including the broad ligament, uterosacral ligaments and especially the round ligaments. The importance of correcting a breech positioning from a Chiropractic perspective is that it can place the baby's head in a flexed or extended position, otherwise known as an AS or PS occiput which can affect the neurological development of the child. In addition, most doctors will no longer perform a vaginal birth if the baby is in the breech position.

The final reason for dystocia according to Williams Obstetrics is the abnormality of the soft tissue of the reproductive tract that could form an obstacle to fetal descent. This can include certain abnormalities such as fibroids or placenta previa which could affect fetal descent. Another way to help the patient if there is an abnormality is to allow them to birth in different positions. Due to a change of angle or pressure, it can allow the baby more room to descend. Examples would be allowing the mom to squat or allowing her to birth on all fours.

Chiropractic has been proven to help women throughout their pregnancy for many years with a variety of the common pregnancy complaints. However the more we learn about the neurological and structural components of the reproductive system, it is critical for pregnant women to be under Chiropractic care to prevent unnecessary medical interventions.

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