

Pregnancy: 'Daily Mail'

I was pregnant when doctors told me I wouldn't be able to walk for a year after giving birth

The newest therapies claim to achieve dramatic results with the minimum of hands-on contact. These extremely gentle treatments aim to encourage the body's own natural healing processes. What's more, they apparently work. In six controlled trials, spiritual healing was shown to improve wound healing and help in the treatment of pain. Adrian White, senior lecturer in Complementary Medicine at the University of Exeter, explains: 'Minimal therapies are a way of introducing a little peace and space into our lives. In fact, the quiet and relaxation they produce may even be part of the treatment.' Many techniques use either extremely gentle pressure on the body, or even direct spiritual energy to the patient without touching them at all. Unlikely as it may sound, many patients claim to have experienced dramatic results. FRANCES OSBORNE, who was cured by one such therapy of an agonizing back pain that left her unable to walk more than a few yards, reports.

When, at six months pregnant, my leg suddenly gave way beneath me, I never dreamed that within two days I'd be told I would be unable to walk for a year. One evening last April I came back from work, walked into the kitchen and my left leg buckled. The next morning, a sharp pain had spread to my right leg, my hips and lower back, leaving me unable to stagger more than a few yards. Each step felt like walking on broken glass. Two days of pain and immobility later, I had seen midwives, GPs and physiotherapists. They all agreed: what was happening was a combination of the loosening of my skeleton by a pregnancy hormone called Relaxin and a previously dormant problem with my back. There was no treatment and no painkiller they could give me. I was likely to remain in pain and be unable to walk for a year. Unfortunately, my husband, a Conservative MP, had to work away from home and over most weekends until the end of my pregnancy. I could not even leave the house to buy food. I have never felt more vulnerable in my life and had moments of utter, sobbing, despair. And then, out of the blue, my cousin, Thoma, who suffers from MS, suggested I went to see Fiona Meeks, a practitioner of Bowen, an incredibly gentle form of osteopathy. Within hours I had an appointment with Fiona at her house in East Sheen, London.

Fiona, a former chief executive of an NHS trust, first heard about Bowen on a radio programme six years ago. She trained as a practitioner and cured her own persistent frozen shoulder at the same time. The therapy is named after the man who invented it, Thomas Bowen, an Australian healer who maintained that the body could heal itself. Bowen practitioners, explained Fiona, don't work on the body directly. Instead they 'roll' or flick the muscle, stimulating it to send a message along the nerves to the brain that 'there's something wrong in this part of the body, please sort it'. But Bowen, said Fiona, can help more than just muscular problems. It is a holistic treatment that can help conditions ranging from stress to asthma. She first assessed the alignment of my body and told me my hips and pelvic were twisted. Then she sat me on a chair, asked me to lean forward on to the treatment table, and gently poked the muscles on my lower back and hips. As she slipped out of the room to give my body 'the space to heal itself', a warm glow spread up my back as though I was slipping into a hot bath. A few minutes later, she returned, changed my position and made a few more 'movements', this time higher up my back and around my neck. She then left again. By the end of the treatment, which lasted almost two hours, during most of which I was left alone, Fiona had 'moved' muscles on my back, neck, arms and legs. My face, arms and back had turned a deep red. 'Now' said Fiona, 'it's time to walk'. As my foot hit the ground, I still felt a twinge, but the real pain had gone. Now I walked rather than hobbled. 'Keep walking as much as you can', she instructed, 'and drink water constantly. Water and walking are the key to Bowen's success'.

I returned to Fiona regularly throughout my pregnancy and she kept me on my feet. Some people find that their condition can be alleviated in a single session of Bowen, which costs around £40 per hour.

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