

The Webster Technique

The Webster Technique: A technique for pregnant women

by ICPA Staff Writer

You have seen the Webster Technique -- that chiropractic technique to help pregnant mothers with breech babies -- featured on The Learning Channel's hit series "A Baby Story." You have read about it in *Mothering* magazine and *Midwifery Today*. You have seen it on the Internet. You have heard it talked about by birthing professionals. Perhaps potential patients have asked you about it. But what is it?

The Webster Technique, discovered by Dr. Larry Webster, founder of the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association (ICPA), is a specific chiropractic adjustment for pregnant mothers. It is a chiropractic technique designed to relieve the causes of intrauterine constraint.

Formerly known as Webster's "In-Utero Constraint Technique" or "Webster's Breech Turning Technique," the Webster Technique was developed by Dr. Webster in 1978. For over 20 years, it has been highly successful in relieving intrauterine constraint and allowing babies to get into the best possible position for birth.

What is intrauterine constraint? Intrauterine constraint is defined as any forces external to the developing fetus that obstructs the normal movement of the fetus. Intrauterine constraint can prevent the developing fetus from attaining a head down vertex position and achieving a vaginal birth, resulting in cesarean section delivery. Today, nearly 13% of all cesarean deliveries performed are due to breech presentation.

In 1985, the World Health Organization (WHO) proposed 15% as the highest acceptable limit for cesarean section rates. This figure was based on the cesarean section rates of countries with the lowest perinatal mortality rates in the world. In 1991, the figure was adopted as a goal for the year 2000 by the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

Currently, approximately 4.6 % of all singleton pregnancies develop into breech presentation and the incidence of perinatal mortality with breech presentation is approximately four times that of a vertex presentation. While many infants in breech presentation before 34 weeks will convert spontaneously to a cephalic presentation, few will do so afterward.

Decreasing the number of caesareans for breech presentation has been offered as a strategy to reach the Healthy People 2000 goal of 15% cesarean section rate. The importance of preventing intrauterine constraint and subsequent cesarean section delivery is apparent, considering in the United States approximately 22% of all births were cesarean section deliveries. In Canada the incidence of cesarean section ranges from 15%-22%, depending on the province. The Webster Technique is a chiropractic means of decreasing the number of caesareans for breech presentation.

Performance of the Webster Technique involves analysis of the relationship of the bones of the pelvis, and correction of aberrant biomechanics through the use of a light force chiropractic adjustment of the sacrum (Step 1). It also involves analysis and relief of specific abdominal muscle tension or spasm (Step 2). Both steps are intended to relieve the musculoskeletal causes of intrauterine constraint that may lead to cesarean section delivery.

It is important to stress at this time that the Webster Technique is not to be misconstrued as the practice of obstetrics. The Webster Technique is a specific chiropractic technique intended to relieve a specific musculoskeletal condition, and is well within the chiropractor's scope of practice. At no time does the chiropractor attempt to change the position of the fetus as is done in external cephalic version (ECV). Untrained individuals should not attempt the Webster Technique.

In addition, the Webster Technique should not be confused with other unproven or unsafe "chiropractic breech turning" techniques.

The ICPA, founded by Dr. Webster, maintains the only database of chiropractors certified in the proper performance of the Webster Technique. In addition, the ICPA currently offers the only courses to certify chiropractors in the proper performance of it.

Growing awareness of the Webster Technique is demonstrating the increased demand for doctors of chiropractic trained to perform it. Because of its ability to facilitate easier, safer deliveries for both mother and baby, many birth care providers are actively seeking doctors of chiropractic with the skills in this technique. Daily, the ICPA receives many requests for referrals.

If you would like to find a Webster Technique certification seminar in your area, or be referred to a chiropractor trained in the Webster Technique, please visit the ICPA website at www.icpa4kids.org or call 610-565-2360.