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The Webster Technique

The Webster Technique has become a cornerstone of chiropractic care during pregnancy, known for its role in optimizing the physiological function of both mother and baby for birth. Developed by Dr. Larry Webster, this technique has grown into an essential tool for chiropractors and families to enhance neuro-biomechanical function in the sacral and pelvic regions. By addressing sacral subluxation and sacroiliac (SI) joint dysfunction through specific adjustments, the Webster Technique helps create a more balanced and functional pelvic environment. In doing so, it can alleviate factors contributing to dystocia—difficult or abnormal labor—ultimately supporting safer, smoother births. Its widespread use has led to remarkable results for mothers worldwide.

The origins of the Webster Technique are rooted in a deeply personal experience for Dr. Webster who observed the after effects of a traumatic birth. After caring for an infant who presented with two broken clavicles following a complicated and invasive pregnancy and birth, including breech presentation, External Cephalic Version (ECV) and traumatic birth, Dr. Webster knew there had to be a less invasive way to support the birthing process. As he reflected on this, he envisioned what would eventually become the Webster Technique—a gentle, non-invasive chiropractic approach that focuses on aligning the sacrum and releasing tension in the pelvic ligaments during pregnancy. This method promotes natural biomechanics and supports optimal neurological function, allowing the birth process to unfold without unnecessary interference.

A Pathway to Safer Births

Dr. Webster first focused this technique on pregnant women with breech babies, and the results were transformative—a majority of babies naturally turned to the optimal head-down position after mom received the adjustment. Initially called the “Webster Breech Turning Technique,” it quickly gained traction as other chiropractors replicated his success. As the technique evolved, it quickly outgrew the nomenclature of a “breech turning technique,” expanding into a holistic approach that supports overall neuro-biomechanical function of pregnant women.

Dr. Webster’s legacy continues through the efforts of the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association (ICPA), which formalized the Webster Technique Certification Program in 2001. Led by Dr. Webster’s wife, Connie Webster, and Dr. Jeanne Ohm, the program emphasized the proactive use of the technique throughout pregnancy to reduce the causes of dystocia and facilitate easier births. Dr. Ohm, in particular, featured the idea that consistent application of the Webster Technique throughout pregnancy could lead to safer, less stressful birth experiences.

By helping prepare the mother’s body for an optimal pregnancy and birth, chiropractors using the Webster Technique play a vital role in promoting a healthier, more natural childbirth process. A safer and less traumatic birth process not only enhances positive birth experiences but also fosters stronger family connections and resilience during the early stages of life. Dr. Webster’s vision continues to inspire families around the world, transforming the way we approach and support childbirth.

Practical Understanding of the Webster Technique: A Two-Tiered Approach to Improving Birth

The Webster Technique has evolved from a focus on breech presentations to a comprehensive method for enhancing neuro-biomechanical function throughout pregnancy. In simple terms, it helps both mother and baby engage in the “dance of birth” with greater ease, awareness, and physiological harmony.

Physically, the Webster Technique supports the neuro-biomechanics of the body by optimizing nervous system function and balancing the pelvic bones, muscles, and uterine ligaments. This approach respects the body’s inborn intelligence, allowing birth to unfold more smoothly and naturally.

On the emotional side, the Webster Technique fosters trust, ease, and self-confidence. Families are empowered to actively participate in the birth process, learning to approach it with adaptability and a greater sense of coherence.

Step One: Enhancing Neuro-Biomechanics

A key reason the Webster Technique has gained widespread popularity is its holistic approach to addressing dystocia—difficult or abnormal labor. As described in Williams Obstetrics, dystocia can stem from three main factors related to the mother’s body:

1. Power

This refers to the strength and effectiveness of uterine contractions. Pelvic misalignments, particularly in the sacrum, can interfere with the nervous system’s ability to coordinate strong, consistent contractions. The Webster Technique corrects sacral subluxations, which improves nerve function and enhances the mother’s ability to coordinate efficient contractions, supporting the natural progression of labor.

2. Passage

The structure of the pelvis must allow enough space for the baby to move through during birth. Sacral misalignments can reduce the size of the pelvic outlet, creating physical barriers for the baby’s descent. By restoring proper pelvic alignment and mobility, the Webster Technique helps increase space in the birth canal, facilitating an easier passage for the baby.

3. Passenger

The baby’s position in the womb is influenced by the mother’s pelvic alignment. Misalignments can create tension in the uterine ligaments, restricting the baby’s movement and leading to unfavorable positions, such as breech. The Webster Technique releases this tension, giving the baby more freedom to move and often encouraging a head-down position for birth.

By addressing the neuro-biomechanical factors that influence labor, the Webster Technique creates the physical conditions necessary for a more natural and efficient birth.

Step Two: Building Confidence and Adaptability

The Webster Technique also nurtures emotional ease, trust, and confidence as families prepare for birth. This approach equips parents with practical tools to align with the birth process through an embodied awareness of the three key elements—Power, Passage, and Passenger. Regular adjustments and a focus on the natural biomechanics help enable a more skillful, active participation in birth.

While the physical benefits of the Webster Technique help facilitate a smoother, more natural birth, its emotional and mental impacts are equally important.

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The technique acts as a stepping stone for families to consciously engage with the active process of giving birth, allowing them to “do the activity” of birth rather than just passively experience it. By developing a deeper connection with the body, families can approach each contraction with greater awareness, using techniques such as focused breathing, relaxation, and body-centered movement to support the birth process.

Although birth is a natural process that requires us to “let go” and allow nature to take its course, it’s also important to recognize that we are consciously involved in it. There are many things we may actively do during labor. Even “letting go” can be considered a deliberate, conscious act. This balance between the body’s natural instincts and our conscious participation is at the heart of the “dance” of birth, and the Webster Technique helps nurture both. It supports the body’s innate function while empowering families to engage mindfully with the birth process, creating a harmonious partnership between the two.

It’s crucial to recognize that there are actions the mother or support team can take that either hinder or enhance the mother and baby’s unique, physiological process. The Webster Technique empowers families to know which actions are in line with their body’s innate wisdom, allowing for a more active, informed, and cooperative approach to labor.

Through this practical understanding, families prepare both physically and emotionally for birth. This preparation leads to several key benefits:

More Positive Birth Experiences

Families feel empowered and less overwhelmed, even when faced with unexpected challenges, reducing the likelihood of birth trauma.

Calm and Confident Providers

Birth professionals are more relaxed when they see parents actively engaged and prepared, making unnecessary interventions appear all the more unnecessary.

Greater Emotional Integration

Mothers, babies, and fathers (or partners) are less likely to experience feelings of helplessness or loss of control, staying connected rather than disconnected from the process.

Stronger Parenting

This sense of empowerment carries into the postpartum period, with families reflecting on the birth experience with confidence and coherence rather than confusion or regret, allowing for a greater start to family wellbeing.

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