

# HERBAL, POSTPARTUM CARE IN THAI TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

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## ABSTRACT

Abstract-- Postpartum is the period after birth to 6 weeks. The mother who tired form birth needs special care for her recovery period. Even though the natural healing process is good enough for most of the mother, additional care will turn the mother to normal physiology as soon as possible. In western obstetric care, the main recommendations after leave the hospital are having good quality and quantity nutrition, proper exercise and adequate rest. However, Thai traditional medicine offers many modalities to promote recovery and healing of the mother. Herbal use is one of them. The method of herbal use can be oral form by eat or drink, external use as bath, vaporization or compression ball by the therapist. Fire confinement uses herbal as combination of heat. Selection of the herb for each purpose is crucial. The risk and benefit of each herb are difference, along with their contraindication and prevention. Eatable herbs can be used as food or any other preparations. The list of herbs and their specification is gathered for the therapist and postpartum mother to reach these Thai wisdom and to maintain this wisdom to the ancestors.

Keywords-- Postpartum care, Herbal, Thai Traditional Medicine

## INTRODUCTION

Pregnancy is a long period of big physiologic change in women's life. It is the main concerning issue of women. The pregnant had changing her body to be the mother. Preparing the change is better than doing nothing.

Postpartum is the period after birth to 6 weeks later. The mother who tired form birth needs special care for her recovery period. Even though the natural healing process is good enough for most of the mother, additional care will turn the mothers to their normal life as soon as possible. In western obstetric care, the main recommendations after leave the hospital are having good quality and quantity nutrition, proper exercise and adequate rest. However, Thai traditional medicine has many modalities to promote recovery and healing of the mother. One of them is the herbal use. It can be used in many aspects, orally as eat or drink, bath, vaporization or compression ball. The procedures are varies to the local wisdom of each part of Thailand and the purpose of treatment.

## POSTPARTUM CARE

In modern or western obstetric care, after the fourth stage of labor, the mothers are transferred to the postpartum ward. Routine postpartum care are started here. Diet are selected by the nutritionist with high protein, energy and quality. Activities are limited in the first day to prevent injury from fainting or blackout due to postural hypotension. Vital signs are recorded regularly every 6 hours. Medication are started such as analgesic, iron supplement and antibiotic if indicated. The infrared light is using for perineum wound care extra from normal hygienic care. It affects by the high temperature to warm the wound area. It makes the wound dry and increase blood supply to promote wound healing and prevent infection.

After the mother leaves the hospital, the procedure are changed. Postpartum mother are left to recover by naturally without any specific intervention. Recommendation are having good quality and quantity nutrition, proper exercise and adequate rest. Medication are continuing as in the hospital.

However, postpartum care in Thai traditional medicine is different. There are many treatments for the mother to promote physiologic recovery and healing of the wound. The purpose of herbal use in postpartum are different in each woman and each part of the country based on the ancient wisdom of the local people. Most of

their core concerning ideas are quick physiological turn to pre-pregnant period and comfort the mother and baby with no or less toxicity. The expecting effect are as followed;

- Promote blood circulation for healing and prevent infection, inflammation
- Promote blood cells production to replace blood lost during delivery and prevent anemia
- Promote breast milk production
- Promote uterine revolution and secretion of lochia
- Reduce muscle and joint pain

## POSTPARTUM HERB

Fire confinement, herbal bath and herbal massage are the topmost using among postpartum. They are not using single herb but using as herbal combination. Many regimens are using in postpartum care since ancient time until now. The most frequent using herb in these regimens are as followed;

*Carthamus tinctorius* is well known as safflower. Many medical effects were reported including antioxidant and hypotensive action. It reduce postpartum pain including abdominal pain, muscle ache and joint pain. It enhances peripheral flow and decrease platelets aggregation. It help bowel movement then it useful as laxative. It also be recommended for rheumatism and paralysis. However, some reports showed its undesirable effects on male and female fertility.

*Leonurus sibiricus*, or Chinese motherwort, is known as its anti-inflammation, anti-bacteria and antioxidant activity. It has protective and DNA repairing activity. In reproductive period, it is using for menstrual regulation in amenorrhea patient. The direct effect on uterine contraction preventing postpartum hemorrhage. It is commonly found in East Asia and Southeast Asia.



Finger Root



Leonurus sibiricus

*Caesalpinia sappan*, so called Brazil or sappan wood. It is commonly found in Southeast Asia. The using part is the dried heartwood. It has antioxidant, anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory, hypoglycemic, vasorelaxant, hepatoprotective and anti-acne activity. It is safe and do not produce any acute or sub-acute toxicity in both male and female rats so it take part in many cosmetic industries.

*Curcuma comosa* is the most popular female herbal supplement in Thailand market. Its Thai name is Wan Chak Mod Loog. It is a kind of phytoestrogen and being used in gynecologic treatment of reproductive women such as premenstrual syndrome. It also reported as anti-inflammation, anti-oxidant and protection of bone loss. Uterotonic activity is the main purpose in postpartum so it enhance lochia secretion and prevent hemorrhage.

*Conioselinum univittatum* is using to reduce dizziness and headache. It increase circulation and prevent anemia. It also has GI effect by reduce bloating or stomach ache.

*Curcuma longa* or turmeric has its outstanding in cosmetic. In postpartum “fire confinement”, it is the best for the mother skin. Due to bleeding during birth, the skin may pale and look dark. Turmeric will brightening the skin color and make it soft and smooth. It also reduce the bacteria or fungus on the skin so possible to reduce infection and inflammation such as acne.



Sappan



Curcuma comosa Roxb.



Ligusticum striatum DC.



Turmeric

*Cambopogon citratus* or lemongrass is commonly use in the kitchen on many Thai dishes. It is well known in vaporized fresh smell. It helps to promote sweating by opening sweat gland and reduce skin smell. In hypertensive patient, it may reduce the blood pressure and reduce the need of antihypertensive medications.

*Citrus hystrix* is a kitchen fruit found in Southeast Asia. Even though grouping as orange, its properties mimic lemon. It enriches of vaporized aroma that feel fresh and relax. It also reduce bloating of gas in stomach. The extraction is widely use in hair shampoo because the specialized effect for hair smoothening.



Lemongrass



Citrus

*Cassumunar ginger* or phlai is in the group of ginger. It is popularly used in fire confinement and postpartum bath. Boiling and vaporized in the small personal tent to soak the whole body for smoothening the skin and increase secretion of cell debris. Reducing muscle ache and joint pain is the main purpose. It also increases circulation and red blood cell production that make the mother feels fresh and relax.

*Blumea balsamifera* or Ngai camphor is in the group of camphor with vaporized smell. It opened sweat gland and promote sweating, soothing the skin. The muscle may relax and the mother feel fresh. It can be used in fire confinement and bath.



Zingiber cassumunar



Blumea balsamifera

*Croton persimillis* of plao yai is not well known but efficient in hematologic and circulation promotion. It promotes secretion of lochia and reduce muscle ache.



*Acacia concinna* or soap pod produces weakly acid. It cleans the skin and reducing rash so the mother feels fresh and clean.



Croton persimilis



Acacia concinna

### HERBAL BATH

Herbal bath is the Thai traditional wisdom. Ancient Thai people lived along the river or canal. They bathed on the riverside using water in the jar, different from shower or bath tub in western country. A small bowl or half of coconut shell took the water from the jar and soaked the whole body. In postpartum mother, they also did the same manner. However, additional herbals were used to put in the water. The concept was not only to clean the body but for health promotions. Herbal were used in many recipes based on culture of each part of Thailand. They may put it fresh or boiled the herbs to be concentrate then diluted it with water. After bath, the water on the skin was left to dry slowly without wiping out. They believed that remaining herbal content on the skin with slow absorption produce longer effect. The varieties of herbs may have their own outstanding benefit such as good smell from pandanus palm, sand ginger and camphor. Some produces only fresh smell but some have health benefit. Camphor is mainly vapor the fresh smell and promote sweating. It also reduce muscle ache.



Pandanus amaryllifolius



Cinnamomum camphora



Polyscias

Some herbs dominant in hot effect such as ginger, noni and croton leaf. These made superficial vessels dilatation and flushing. It turned pinky skin. Thai family like the flushing as healthy circulatory system more than pale skin that means unhealthy skin.



Alpinia galanga



Morinda citrifolia

Some herbal with sour or bitter taste may help superficial circulation, too, Tamarind leaf and sappan are the well-known herb. Their tastes and smell may cover the body smell, foul smell of lochia, reduce inflammation, promote wound healing and make the mother feel relax from increasing skin circulation.

### BENEFIT OF HERBAL BATH

Comparing to traditional bath without herbs, herbal bath has more benefits on

1. Since the skin always release their death cells and tissue debris, warm herbal bath dilates the pore size of the skin glands and promote secretion of death tissue or toxin form the skin. Mother can feels the freshness and cleanness of the skin.
2. Remaining weight after birth in postpartum mother may reduce by opening the sweating gland and increasing circulation.
3. Increase circulation to the wound that promote wound healing and reduce inflammation.
4. Increasing muscle circulation can reduce muscle ache and fatigue.
5. Mood relaxation and reduce psychological complication in postpartum such as postpartum depression.

### CONCLUSION

Thai wisdom had been practice for centuries. Even though modern western medical knowledge is commonly used in the city. In rural area remain keeping Thai wisdom especially Thai traditional medicine. Postpartum care with herbal usage is one of them. Many modalities were practicing and kept continuing. Herbal bath is the popular remaining among these, collateral with fire confinement and herbal ball compression. The herbal ball increase efficiency of pain reducing massage with skin caring effect. Fire confinement also mixed the modalities and regimen of herbs. Without definite document of toxicity, this wisdom should be maintained for our Thai people. It can be the combination of both traditional knowledge and western to increase benefit and reduce the complication of postpartum mother. Further new knowledge needs to be continue and develop the best herbal regimen for postpartum.

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