



EASE BACK

Managing your back
and pelvic girdle pain
in pregnancy

NHS
National Institute for
Health Research



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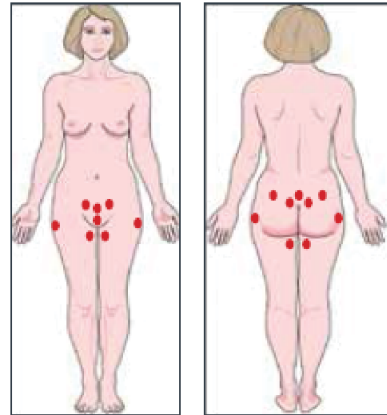
Introduction

During pregnancy there are many changes to your body. Some of these may cause you to experience pain or discomfort in your lower back, pelvis and legs. This booklet is designed to provide information and to advise you about ways to help manage your symptoms, to reduce the pain, prevent it from getting worse, maintain your day to day activities, and reduce the possibility of your pain continuing after your pregnancy.

Back pain and pelvic girdle pain in pregnancy

What is back and pelvic girdle pain?

This is pain in or around your back and pelvic region. You may experience pain in some or all of the areas shown in the diagram. It may be in your lower back, buttock(s), the outside of your hips, or in your groin or pubic area. You may have pain in one or both legs. Pain may be mild, moderate or severe.



Symptoms

You may experience:

- Back, pelvic or leg pain during normal activities of daily living
- Clicking or grinding in the back or pelvic area
- Pain or difficulty moving your legs apart, for example getting into a car or bath
- Difficulty and pain on walking
- Difficulty and pain standing on one leg, for example to climb stairs, or to get dressed
- Difficulty and pain turning over in bed
- Disturbed sleep
- Difficult and painful sexual intercourse

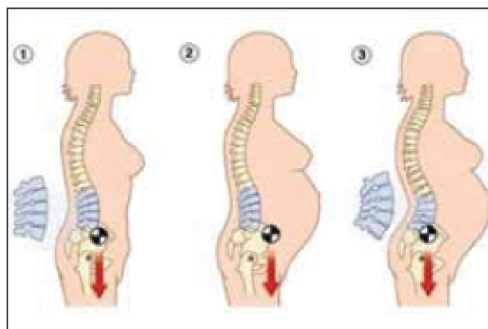
Why do I have this pain?

During pregnancy, hormones (relaxin and progesterone) are released which affect your soft tissues (muscles and ligaments). They work to soften the muscles and ligaments around your back and pelvis in order to prepare your body for pregnancy and labour. These hormones allow your ligaments to stretch more than normal and can cause the joints in your back and pelvis to move more than they would normally. The muscles and ligaments can become overstretched and weak, which then leads to pain.

Changes occur in the muscles of your stomach, pelvic floor and pelvis which can lead to your back and pelvis not being supported properly. Your tummy muscles soften and lengthen as your baby grows. This can make them less effective in supporting your back and pelvis. There could be an imbalance in your muscles, with some working too hard and becoming tight and painful, and others becoming weak.

As your pregnancy progresses both your posture and balance change which can affect how your muscles and joints move. This may cause pain during your everyday activities. Sometimes there may be uneven movement in your back and pelvic joints. This could have been present before your pregnancy and is exaggerated now because of the changes to your body. This could also happen in pregnancy as a result of you having poor posture, poor ways of moving, or doing repetitive movements.

Your body adjusts to the weight gain during pregnancy by changing your posture and the way you stand. This can result in increased strain through your back and pelvis, as shown below. Sometimes the position of the baby can alter your posture which could cause pain. In addition, the hormones released make you feel more tired, which puts extra strain on your body.



1. **NEUTRAL** spine, with body weight through pelvis
2. As baby bump grows, body weight is pulled forward
3. The lower curve of the spine can become exaggerated to accommodate the weight of the bump, putting increased strain on the back

How common is it?

Back pain is very common in pregnancy, and is experienced by up to 2 out of every 3 women. The pain usually starts around the 18th week of pregnancy although it can start earlier, and is often worse at night. It can mean that you have some restriction in your movement. Your ability to sit, stand, or walk for long periods of time may also be affected. This is a normal part of pregnancy. However, it is not normal to have pain which stops you doing your daily activities. The pain is rarely due to a serious problem that requires further tests or investigations. However, severe back pain that is accompanied by vaginal bleeding or discharge could indicate an underlying problem that needs prompt attention. If this applies to you, you should contact your midwife or GP right away.

What should I expect over the course of the rest of my pregnancy?

You may find that your back pain and pelvic pain remains the same, improves or worsens as your pregnancy progresses. You may get emotional because of the pain. Do not suffer in silence. Let your family, friends, midwife, and doctor know about it, as it is better to seek help and advice than not. We hope you will find the information in this booklet helps you to manage and reduce your pain.

The majority of women with back or pelvic girdle pain can have a vaginal delivery. Many women worry that their back or pelvic pain will increase during labour but this is not usually the case. There are alternate birthing positions which will help to reduce the stress on your back and pelvis; these are discussed later, on page 24.

Your back pain or pelvic pain should reduce or go completely after delivery. The vast majority of women find that their pain disappears by 3 to 6 months after the birth of their baby.

What will help my back and pelvic pain?

Many women can manage their pain through pregnancy with the right information about good self-management, particularly postural changes and simple exercises. These are explained in the following sections and include:

- Posture during pregnancy
- Physical activity during pregnancy
- Exercises
- Advice about the workplace
- Handy self-management hints and tips
- Advice for labour and after the birth

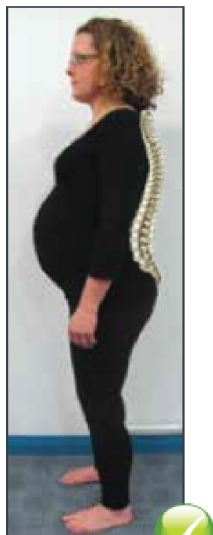
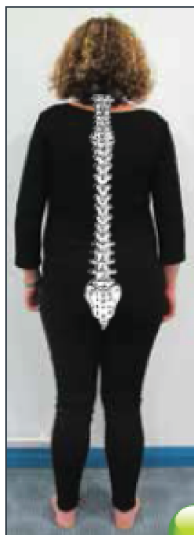
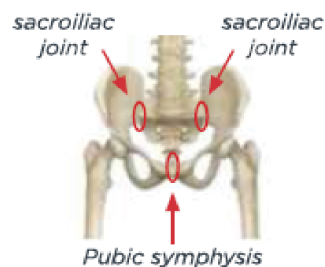
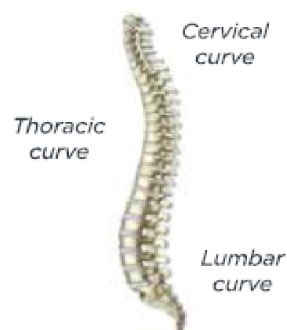
Posture during pregnancy

Maintaining good posture throughout your pregnancy is very important.

Structure of the back and pelvis

The spine is a double S shape. When it is in this position it puts the least stress on the structures in the spine – the nerves, discs, muscles, and ligaments. This ideal position is called the **NEUTRAL** position. Any alteration in posture from the **NEUTRAL** position will cause stress on the back and pelvis, which in turn can lead to pain.

The pelvis is made up of two large bones which form a basin-shape. The bones are joined by cartilage and ligaments at the back where they connect with the spine (the sacroiliac joints), and at the front (pubic symphysis). During late pregnancy hormones soften and relax these ligaments. This gives the pelvic bones the ability to stretch and open more easily for the birth of the baby.



Maintaining correct posture

Think about your posture – how you sit, stand and move – throughout your pregnancy, and use the following information to help reduce your pain.

How should I stand?

- Stand with equal weight on both legs
- Keep your knees soft, not locked back
- Keep your head upright over your body, and keep your shoulders back and down
- Think tall and maintain a **NEUTRAL** spine

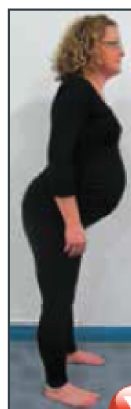
How should I NOT stand?



- Don't put most of your weight through one hip



- Don't swing your hips forward and lean your body backwards to try to 'balance' your bump



- Don't let your tummy bump tip you forward - it could over exaggerate the curve in your lower back



- Avoid standing on one leg to get dressed: sit down to put on underwear, trousers and shoes
- Try to change your position frequently: alternate between standing, sitting and walking

*The **NEUTRAL** position or S shaped curve of your spine is lost when you adopt poor postures. This can cause excess pressure on your back and pelvis, stretch your ligaments too much, and does not encourage your abdominal and bottom muscles to work.*

How should I walk?

If you have pain during walking, take smaller strides. Try to walk evenly, spending an equal length of time on each leg. Take even size strides controlling any waddling. You may find you waddle more when you get tired. It may help if you slow down your walking pace. Try to avoid walking for long periods of time - pace yourself.

How should I go up and down the stairs?

Do stairs one at a time. If you have more pain on one side, then go up the stairs leading with your less painful side, and come down leading with your more painful side. Use the handrail if there is one. Try to avoid using the stairs frequently throughout the day. Try to bring everything that you need for the day downstairs at the same time to save you unnecessary stair climbing whilst you are in pain.

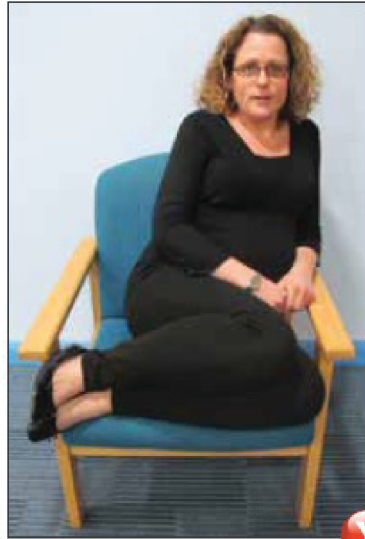
How should I sit?

- Sit on a firm chair preferably with 2 arms – avoid soft squidgy sofas which will make you adopt a poor posture
- Your bottom should be right at the back of the chair
- If you do sit on a deep sofa, put a few pillows behind you so your knee crease is 2 fingers' width out from the front edge of the sofa
- Ensure that your feet are firmly on the ground
- Your knees should be level with your hips – not higher or lower. You may need to put something under your feet, for example a box file, old biscuit tin, catalogue, or book
- Sit with equal weight on both buttocks
- Support your lumbar curve using a folded towel. Lumbar supports are available to buy, but unlike a towel, cannot be adapted for individual use
- It is usually best not to use a cushion to support your back, as they are often too big
- Maintain the spine **NEUTRAL** position (S shaped curve)
- Do not sit in one position for too long. Every 20-30 minutes check that you are still in that good position, or get up and move around
- Having a chair with arm supports makes it easier to stand up and sit down. If you do not have a suitable chair, try a garden chair (the green/white plastic stackable ones) with a slim cushion on the seat so there is no dip in the seat of the chair
- If you have any upper back, neck or shoulder pain, sit with pillows under your arms as shown in the picture



How should I NOT sit?

- Avoid leaning to one side. If you sit with your legs curled up, or lean on one arm at the side, the **NEUTRAL** position of your spine is lost, causing stress on your back and pelvis. This in turn will cause pain



- Avoid slouching. If you need to put your feet up, then lie down. If you sit with your feet up, you become slumped and lose the **NEUTRAL** position of your spine. This increases the pressure on your back and pelvis and can cause pain



Sitting in a poor posture puts a lot of stress on your back and pelvis. Sitting poorly during pregnancy adds even more stress to your back and pelvis.

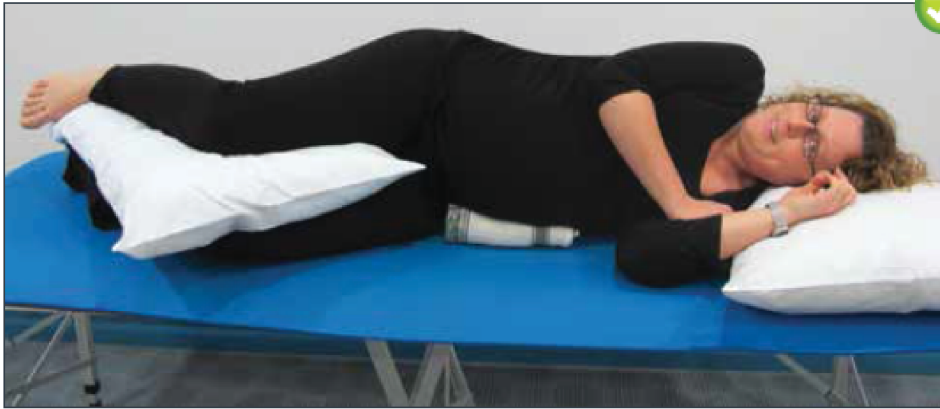
How should I stand up from a chair?

- Maintain a **NEUTRAL** spine position throughout
- Follow the stages in the photographs below, one at a time
- Tighten your tummy, pelvic floor and buttock muscles
- Move your bottom to the front of the chair, using the arms of the chair to push yourself forward. Keep your spine in a **NEUTRAL** position with an S shaped curve. Imagine that the base of your spine, your tailbone, is pointing up and back. Do not tuck your bottom under
- Once at the front of the chair, check your tummy, bottom and pelvic floor muscles are tight
- Bend at the hip slightly, keeping the **NEUTRAL** spine position and stand up
- Push evenly through both arms and use the strong muscles in your legs: don't twist as you stand up
- In standing, keep your knees over your toes. Don't let your knees knock together
- Reverse this procedure to sit down



How should I lie?

If you get pain on your outer hip from lying on your side, it may help to place an extra duvet or sleeping bag on the bed to make it softer.



How should I sleep?

You need to sleep on a firm bed. Your mattress should support your weight and not sag, but there should also be some cushioning to the bony points of your shoulder and side of your hip.

Place pillows between your legs so your top leg is fully supported and parallel to the lower leg. Place a small cushion or folded towel under your bump to stop it pulling you forward and twisting your spine. You should avoid lying on your back for long periods of time whilst pregnant. It is not good for your back and pelvis due to stress on the ligaments from extra abdominal weight, and it can also cause you to become breathless or dizzy.

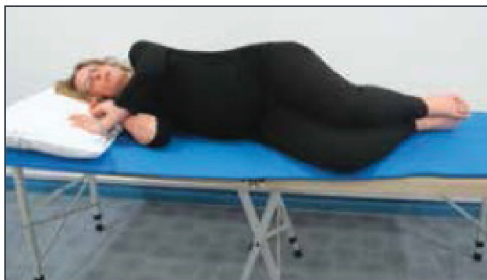
To turn over in bed, tighten your tummy muscles, buttocks and pelvic floor, and bend both knees up. Then turn your body and legs together in several stages. Avoid twisting your spine. You may benefit from using a silky nightshirt and silky bedding to help you to turn over more easily.

- Remember to keep your spine in a **NEUTRAL** position

Take care how you move and position yourself during the day as this will help to reduce your symptoms at night.

How should I get out of bed?

- Tighten your tummy muscles, pelvic floor and buttocks
- Bend both knees up
- Roll onto one side - move your shoulders, hips and knees at the same time, so you are not twisted. Keep your spine in a **NEUTRAL** position
- Tighten your tummy and pelvic floor muscles, and squeeze your buttocks together
- Keep your legs together
- Move your legs forward, and as they swing off the bed push through your hands and arms so you come into sitting without twisting your pelvis or back
- To get into bed, reverse this process
- You may find one side of the bed easier to get in and out of. If this is not the side you normally sleep on, consider swapping sides



How should I get into a car?

- Place 2 plastic bags on the car seat and move the seat right back to give you enough room
- Stand with your back to the open car door
- Tighten your tummy muscles, pelvic floor and buttocks maintaining a **NEUTRAL** spine
- Sit down with your bottom first into the car
- Swivel your bottom on the plastic bags and keeping your legs together; lift them round into the car. If this is painful, slowly walk your feet round in small steps into the car, limiting the distance that you open your legs
- Position yourself with your bottom right back in the car seat and your feet on the floor of the car foot-well
- Use a folded towel to keep the **NEUTRAL** spine position
- Remember to adopt the **NEUTRAL** spine sitting posture whether you are the driver or the passenger
- Remember to remove the plastic bags before driving
- You may be able to use the mother and children parking bays at supermarkets and large stores, which will give you extra room to get in and out of the car



How should I get in and out of the bath?

- If you have a shower cubicle use this rather than the bath
- If possible, have someone available to help you
- If using the bath, sit on the side of the bath and swing your legs over, keeping them together

- Lower yourself down into the bath using your arms
- To get out of the bath, roll onto your knees and push up with both arms
- Sit on the side of the bath and swing your legs over and out
- Boards which fit across the bath enabling you to sit and use the shower are available to purchase (for around £30 from large high street chemists). Speak to your midwife if you need further information
- Only have a bath when someone else is in the house in case you have any problems getting out

How should I lift?

If possible, try to avoid lifting. Ask for help. However, if you have to lift:

- Keep your back in a **NEUTRAL** position and bend your knees to kneel down
- Do not stoop to pick up an object
- Bring the load close to your body and tighten your tummy muscles, pelvic floor muscles and buttocks
- Use your thigh muscles to stand up





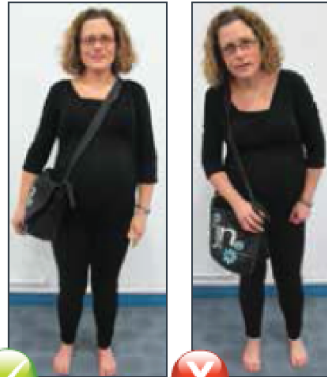
How should I lift children?

Rather than lifting, encourage your child to climb onto your knee whilst you are sitting in a chair. When bathing your child, kneel or squat next to the bath before lowering them in or taking them out. When putting your child into, or taking them out of the car stand close to the car, and bend your knees, keeping your back straight. Encourage older children to climb in themselves.

How should I carry objects?

There are many items we carry as part of our everyday activities. It is important to try and avoid carrying heavy items, and carrying for prolonged periods of time. The example given here is for carrying a handbag, an item that most women carry on a daily basis.

- Try to avoid heavy shoulder bags, as these make your posture uneven
- Keep the minimum possible in your bag and consider using a smaller sized bag 
- It is best to have a rucksack on your back (using both arm straps, not just one), or a bag that goes across your body 



If you have a toddler, try to avoid carrying them on one hip. Encourage your toddler to do as much as they can themselves, so you don't need to lift or carry them.

What type of footwear should I wear?

The effect of hormones in pregnancy and the additional weight can make your feet roll inwards, which can affect your back and pelvis. You will find it more comfortable to wear shoes which support your feet properly and are flat or low heeled. Avoid high heels, flimsy flip-flops, mules or slip-on shoes, and 'UGG-style' boots, as they do not give your feet the support they need whilst you are pregnant.

Physical activity during pregnancy

Shopping:

- Try to avoid carrying heavy loads
- Ensure that bags are carried evenly in both arms - carrying more on one side will cause your back and pelvis to twist
- When loading the boot of the car put the heaviest bags nearest to you to save you stretching
- Ask for help with shopping, or consider shopping online and getting shopping delivered
- Take regular breaks

Housework:

- Don't expect to be able to clean the whole house in one go like you may have managed before your pregnancy
- Sit down whenever possible – for example, at the kitchen table to prepare food
- Raise the height of your washing up bowl by placing a large saucepan upside down in the sink, and then place the bowl on top
- Consider kneeling rather than bending over for activities such as cleaning windows, emptying the washing machine and dish washer
- Ensure your ironing board is at waist level to avoid prolonged stooping, or sit down in a supported chair to do the ironing
- Try to avoid vacuuming as it puts pressure on your back and pelvis

Learn to pace yourself with your housework – do a little at a time and take frequent breaks

Which positions should I use for sexual intercourse?

Try positions which allow you to keep your legs closer together, such as lying on your side or kneeling on all fours. You might choose to be intimate at times of the day when you are not already tired. If you cannot find a comfortable position, you may wish to consider other ways to be intimate until your pain eases.

Exercise:

Regular physical activity can help keep your back muscles strong and can help to relieve pain. Certain activities are ideal for pregnant women, for example, walking and swimming. However it is best to avoid cycling. Exercising in water is great as the water supports your body weight. Your local pool may have antenatal water classes – remember if you have back or pelvic pain, avoid breast stroke legs, where your legs move wide apart.

Yoga and pilates can help you stretch and tone your muscles. Make sure your teacher is properly qualified and knows that you are pregnant. Work at your own pace. There may be antenatal yoga, pilates, or other antenatal exercise classes available locally. Contact your local leisure centre for more information.

Pregnancy is NOT the time to start a completely new exercise regime. If you were quite sporty and active before your pregnancy there is no need to give it up, although contact sports are best avoided. Check with your midwife if you have any concerns about exercising.

Exercises to relieve and prevent pain

Why is exercise important?

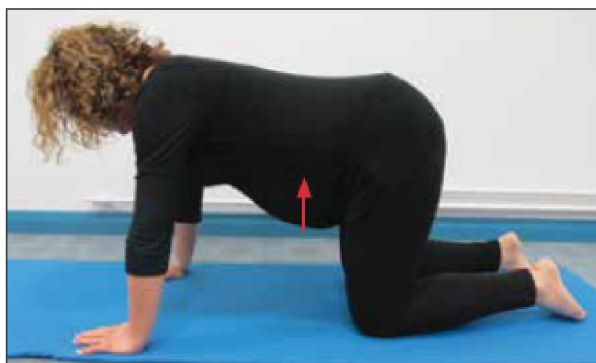
The exercises below are important as they will help maintain muscle strength, which in turn will help you preserve good posture. Try to do each exercise 10 times then rest. Repeat this 2 or 3 times. If any of the exercises aggravate your pain, reduce or stop doing them.

Muscles can become stretched and weakened during pregnancy, so it is important to exercise

Exercises to help strengthen your stability muscles

You have muscles that act like a 'corset' to support your back and pelvis. This exercise will help to strengthen them.

- Get onto all fours
- Breathe in, and as you breathe out, gently draw your tummy-button upwards towards your spine
- Do not arch your back
- Hold for 10 seconds (3 to 4 breaths), then release
- Repeat 2 to 3 times
- During this exercise, your back should not move; you should feel a tightening in your lower abdomen



Pelvic tilt:

- Stand against a wall with your back straight but relaxed, and legs hip width apart
- Put equal weight on both legs, with knees gently bent



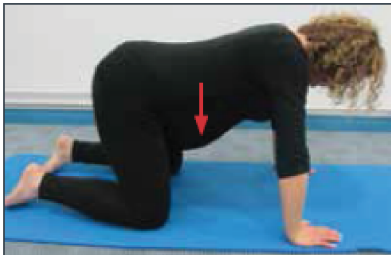
- Gently tilt your pelvis forwards



- Gently tilt your pelvis backwards so your back is flat against the wall and hold

- Do this 10 times then rest. Repeat 2 to 3 times

This exercise can also be done in sitting, on all fours, and in side lying. Choose the position that is most comfortable for you.



Exercises for your pelvic floor muscles

Your pelvic floor muscles act like a hammock to support your pelvis and the weight of your baby. These muscles also help to control your bladder and bowels. During pregnancy these muscles become weakened. The following exercises will help to strengthen your pelvic floor muscles.

- Tighten the muscles around your back passage, your vagina and front passage
- Lift up inside - imagine you are trying to stop passing wind and urine at the same time, and hold

- Do not hold your breath, squeeze your legs together, tighten your buttocks or hold your tummy in when you do these pelvic floor exercises

It is important to do two types of pelvic floor exercises: slow and fast.

1. Slowly tighten your pelvic floor muscles, as above. Hold for 10 seconds, and then relax. Rest for 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times. If you cannot hold for 10 seconds, hold for as long as you can, making a note of how many seconds you can hold for. Then gradually build up to 10 seconds as you practice.
2. Tighten your pelvic floor muscles quickly. Let go quickly and then re-tighten quickly. Repeat 10 times.

Repeat 2 to 3 sets of these exercises.

Exercises to strengthen your bottom, pelvis and hips

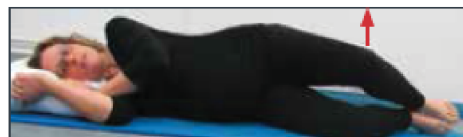
1. Static squeeze

- Stand with your legs straight and your arms by your sides
- Tighten your buttocks and hold for a count of 10, remembering to breath throughout
- This exercise can also be done in sitting or lying. Choose the position that is most comfortable for you
- Practice 2 to 3 sets of these exercises throughout the day



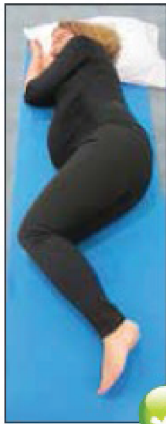
2. 'Clams' exercise

- Lie on one side, with your hips and knees bent
- Imagine you are lying against a wall, with your back and heels touching the wall

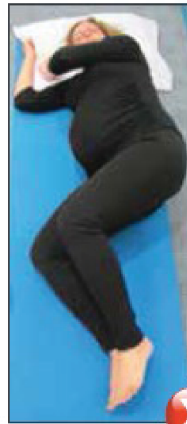


- Keeping your feet together, slowly lift the top knee, turning the hip out. Go only as far as is comfortable
- Do not roll forwards or backwards on your hip

- Hold, then return to the start position, controlling your leg as you lower it slowly
- Repeat 10 times. Rest, then repeat 2 to 3 times
- Turn over and repeat 10 times on the other side



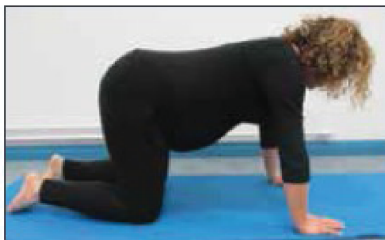
Maintain the **NEUTRAL** position throughout this exercise



Do not roll forwards or backwards on your hip, when lifting your knee

Exercise to gently stretch your lower back

- Start on all fours, with a slight gap between your knees, with your back in the **NEUTRAL** position
- Keeping your back flat, and your arms in front of you, slowly move backwards until your bottom is resting on your heels
- Keeping your bottom on your heels, lean into the stretch, and gently stretch your arms out in front of you, lowering your head and body towards the floor

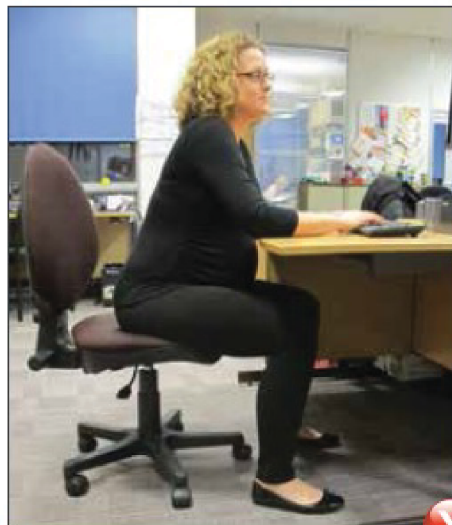
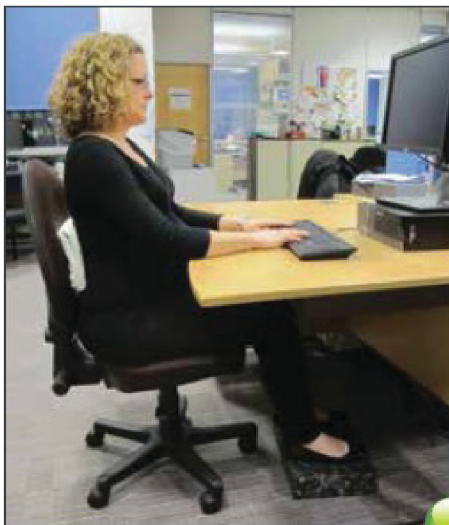


- The size of your bump may prevent you from getting your head and body near to the floor, but just stretch as far as is comfortable for you
- Hold for 20 seconds then return to the starting position. Repeat 2 to 3 times. Do this stretch several times a day

Advice about the workplace

- If your job involves a lot of sitting make sure you have an appropriate chair and you sit in a good posture as described in the section on posture (page 9)
- Check your posture regularly to ensure you are sitting correctly
- Stand up and move around regularly
- You may find a chair with arms is more supportive than one without
- Your feet should be flat on the floor or on a footrest (or you could use a box file or large book)
- Tuck your chair under your desk as far as possible
- The computer screen should be at eye level
- Ensure your mouse, telephone and any documents are within easy reach, so you do not have to twist or bend to reach them

If your job involves a lot of standing, walking or stair climbing talk to your employer to see if you can reduce the length of time you spend on your feet and have regular breaks.



Check with your employer - you may be able to have an occupational health work assessment done for your back pain whilst pregnant.

Handy self-management hints and tips

Drink plenty of water and eat a healthy diet: Try to avoid becoming constipated. The lower back muscles are easily strained when extra effort is needed. Ensure you eat plenty of fibre rich foods (fruit, vegetables and wholegrain), and try to drink 2 litres (3½ pints) of water a day.

Keep your feet moving: If you have swollen ankles or legs do not sit with feet up as it will make you slouch and aggravate your back or pelvic pain. Lie on your side instead. Keep your feet moving: bend your ankles forward and backward to try and help reduce the swelling. Support stockings may help. Ask your partner to massage your feet and legs regularly.

Try regular relaxation: It is hard work being pregnant, listen to your body and rest when you need to. Regular relaxation can help to reduce your pain. There are many different ways to relax. Some techniques concentrate on breathing, whilst others relax your whole body, relieving muscle tension caused by the stresses of everyday life during pregnancy. Yoga and pilates can help you to relax. There may be classes available locally. Contact your local leisure centre for more information.

Try heat and cold: If you have tight muscles or muscle spasms applying gentle heat or cold can help reduce the pain and discomfort. This can be done several times a day.

Before you apply heat or cold you should ensure you have normal sensation over the area and can tell if something hot or cold is touching the area.

You can use a hot water bottle or a wheat bag over your lower back, hips or buttocks. Applying heat will cause the area it comes into contact with to become red. This is normal, but ensure that the heat applied is not too hot. Do not lie or sit against a heat pack, or put it directly on your bump. Leave it in place for a maximum of 20 minutes.

Cold can be applied by using a wheat bag put in the freezer, or a bag of frozen peas wrapped up in a wet cloth. Do not apply cold directly to skin. Leave in place for a maximum of 20 minutes. Do not place directly on your bump.

Try massage: Ask your partner or a friend to massage the muscles which are tight or sore, ensuring that they do not press too hard. You could also use heat prior to this massage. You can use baby oil, almond oil or moisturising cream to massage with. Do not use aromatherapy oils.

Try medication for pain relief: If you feel you need to take painkillers, paracetamol is usually safe to take. However, before taking any medicine when you're pregnant, you should get advice from your midwife or GP. Paracetamol is the preferred choice to treat mild or moderate pain, and is used routinely during all stages of pregnancy for pain relief. There is no clear evidence that it has any harmful effects on the unborn baby. However, as with any medicine taken during pregnancy, use paracetamol at the lowest effective dose for the shortest possible time. If the recommended dose of paracetamol doesn't ease your symptoms speak to your midwife or GP.

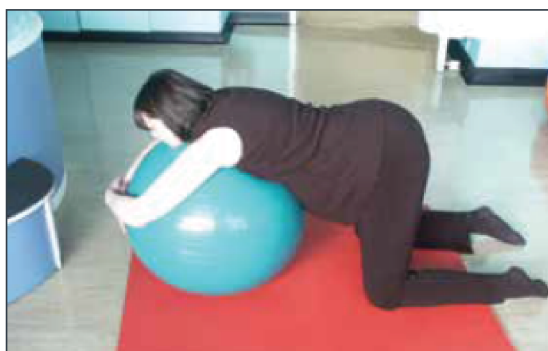
Try equipment to help: Some women with back and pelvic pain find walking aids useful. This should be discussed with your midwife. Supportive underwear, pelvic supports and maternity belts are available and some women find them helpful. These are available on the internet and from larger high-street chemists and maternity shops. Cost typically ranges from £12 to £40. (Also see section on 'Useful websites' page 29).

Advice for labour and after the birth

If you have severe back or pelvic pain you can ask to be examined in a side lying or kneeling position during labour. The position you adopt in labour and to give birth is important. Try to think about which positions are comfortable for you beforehand. If possible, try to avoid delivering on your back with your legs wide apart or bent up in stirrups. There are other positions which will reduce the stress on your back and pelvis. Some examples are shown below.



1. High Kneeling



2. Ball Kneeling



3. Leg neutral



4. Standing forward leaning



5. Side lying with wedge

The positions you can use may vary depending on whether you give birth at the midwife birth centre or the consultant delivery suite. Ensure you regularly change position during labour. Make sure whoever is delivering the baby is aware of your history of back and pelvic pain. Your birth partner can support you in communicating this.

If you have pubic pain and it hurts to open your legs, it is worthwhile you measuring your 'pain free gap'. Whilst sitting or lying on your back with your knees bent, measure how far you can separate your legs without pain. You could use a piece of string or ribbon to do this then attach it to your maternity notes so you can give it to the midwife when you give birth. If you have an epidural ensure the midwife knows what your 'pain free gap' is, so she can try to avoid moving your legs beyond this.



If you need to have stitches after delivery, ensure the midwife knows you have had back and pelvic pain so they can move both your legs together.

Having back and pelvic pain is not a reason to have a caesarean section. Most women are able to have a vaginal delivery.

After the baby is born, most women find that their back and pelvic pain improves quickly. However you may continue to experience some pain while your body takes time to recover from the birth. Caring for a new baby can put strain on your back and pelvis, so it is important to continue following all the advice given for 3 to 6 months after the birth. If you continue to have symptoms after you have delivered, seek advice from your GP or midwife.

Feeding your baby:

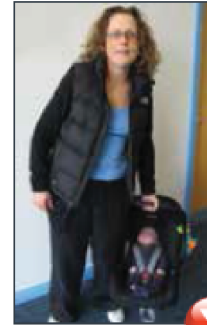
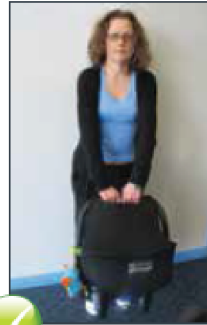
- Whether you are breast or bottle feeding your baby, you will spend a lot of time in a sitting position
- Try to sit in a comfortable, but firm chair
- Make sure your back is well supported to maintain the **NEUTRAL** position
- Wedge a small towel in your lower back to keep your spine in the **NEUTRAL** position
- Use pillows to support your arms and your baby
- There are leaflets available from your midwife which explain good positioning in more detail

Changing nappies:

- Ensure you have everything you need to hand and close to you
- A small baby may be changed on your knee whilst you are sitting
- Avoid stooping - use a changing station, a cot top changer, or kneel at the side of the bed or sofa

Bathing your baby:

- Stand to bathe your baby. Use a changing station with integral baby bath, or use a washing up bowl in the sink
- If you are using the bath, kneel down at the side of it rather than bending over
- Ask for help from others, if this is available



Lifting and carrying:

- Try to avoid lifting and carrying where possible
- Carry your baby (and other objects) in front of you and close to your body – a baby sling may be helpful
- Try to avoid carrying your baby in the car seat – ideally put the seat on the pram if possible
- If you do need to carry the car seat, carry it in front of you with equal weight in both arms, not on your hip or using only one arm
- Ask for help from others, if this is available

Pram:

- If you have not already bought your pram think about getting one with an adjustable handle particularly if you and your partner are different heights
- If your pram has a shopping trolley underneath it, always bend down from the knees to load and unload it - do not bend from your back
- Do not stoop to put your baby in the pram – bend your knees and keep your back in a good position

Cot:

- Cots with drop down sides and an adjustable mattress height are best
- Avoid stooping over the side of the cot. Lower the side of the cot to lift or lower your baby

Handy summary

- **Ensure good posture at all times: sitting, standing, lying, moving. Keep your spine in a NEUTRAL position**
- **Find a chair that will support your good posture and use it instead of a low, soft sofa**
- **Avoid heavy lifting, bending or twisting your spine**
- **Exercise your pelvic floor and the muscles in your tummy, hips and bottom regularly**
- **Using techniques such as massage or a heat pack can be helpful**
- **Ask for help**

We hope that you have found the information in this booklet helpful, as you manage your back and pelvic pain. Note that posture and exercise can take several weeks to help, but keep following the advice given in this booklet.

If after trying the advice in this booklet you continue to experience a lot of pain which stops you from doing your usual activities, or you have any other concerns, please talk to your midwife about accessing further help.

Useful websites

National Childbirth Trust (NCT)

www.nct.org.uk

The National Childbirth Trust has evolved to support parents and parents-to-be through a nationwide network of local branches.

Pelvic partnership

www.pelvicpartnership.org.uk

The pelvic partnership offers support and information about pelvic girdle pain.

The Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Women's Health (ACPWH)

www.acpwh.csp.org.uk

The ACPWH is a UK based professional network of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. The 'Publications and booklets' page has information relating to pelvic girdle pain for mothers-to-be and new mothers, as well as information on relaxation and pelvic floor exercises.

Homestart

www.home-start.org.uk

Home-Start is a national family support charity that helps parents to build better lives for their children.

The Guild of Pregnancy and Post-Natal Exercise Instructors

www.postnatalexercise.co.uk

This website provides lots of information about exercise in pregnancy and lists instructors who are trained by the Guild of Pregnancy and Postnatal Exercise.

Acknowledgements

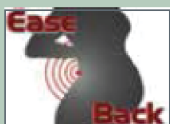
We would like to thank the many physiotherapists who responded to the EASE BACK survey in 2012, providing different examples of information and advice leaflets they give to pregnant women with back and pelvic pain. This information has been invaluable in shaping the content of this self-management booklet.

We would also like to thank the women with experience of pregnancy related back pain, physiotherapists, and the exercise specialist who provided feedback on the draft version of this booklet. We would like to express particular thanks to Kris Wilkinson, Emily Mounsey, Heather Minors and Helen Myers for their assistance in producing this booklet.



This project was funded by the National Institute for Health Research Health Technology Assessment (NIHR HTA) Programme (project number 10/69/05) and will be published in full in Health Technology Assessment.

The views and opinions expressed therein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the HTA programme, NIHR, NHS or the Department of Health.



EASE BACK

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