

Back pain during pregnancy isn't surprising, but it still deserves attention. There is no need to suffer thinking it will be over soon enough!

Back pain during pregnancy is a common complaint – and it's no wonder. You're gaining weight, your centre of gravity changes, and your hormones are relaxing the ligaments in the joints of your pelvis. Moving around and getting comfortable can be a challenge, changing your normal habits. Often, however, you can prevent or ease back pain during pregnancy.



GOOD POSTURE

As your baby grows and your belly extends, your centre of gravity shifts forward. To avoid falling forward, you might compensate by leaning back. Often people develop an increased lumbar lordosis – inward curving of the spine. This can strain the muscles and joints in your lower back and contribute to back pain during pregnancy. Keep the following principles of good posture in mind:

- Stand up straight and tall.
- Imagine flattening your back.
- Hold your chest high.
- Keep your shoulders back and relaxed.
- Don't lock your knees.

When you stand, use a comfortably wide stance for the best support. If you must stand for long periods of time, rest one foot on a low step or stool, and take time for frequent breaks.

Good posture also means sitting with care. Choose a chair that supports your back, or place a small pillow behind your lower back.



SLEEP ON YOUR SIDE

Sleep on your side, not your back. You may have been told this already by your doctor because of the effect that sleeping on your back can have on your breathing and circulation. However, sleeping on your side also ensures much better alignment of your spine, which means less pain. Keep one or both knees bent with a pillow between your knees.



7 TIPS To Relieve Pregnancy Back Pain

Consider using pregnancy or support pillows between your bent knees, under your abdomen and behind your back.



LIFT PROPERLY

When lifting a small object, squat down and lift with your legs. Don't bend at the waist or lift with your back. It's also important to know your limits. Ask for help if you need it. Try to carry things close to your body (which may be tricky with a protruding belly) but the closer it is to you the smaller the load is on your spine.



GET THE RIGHT GEAR

Wear low-heeled shoes (not flat flip-flops) with good arch support, for example a pair of trainers. Avoid high heels, which can further shift your balance forward and add strain to your lower back.

You might also consider wearing a maternity support belt. Although research on the effectiveness of maternity support belts is limited, some women find the additional support helpful.



TRY HEAT, COLD OR MASSAGE

Use whatever makes you comfortable and eases your pain and stress. Some may prefer a heat pad to a cold pack. Although scorching hot baths and saunas are not recommended as they raise your core body temperature, localised heat over a painful lower back will not harm the baby. Massage performed by a professional may also provide help and much needed relief.



INCLUDE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN YOUR DAILY ROUTINE

Regular physical activity can keep your back strong and might relieve back pain during pregnancy. With your healthcare provider's OK, try gentle activities such as walking or swimming or aquacise. A physical therapist also can show you strengthening and stretching exercises that might help.



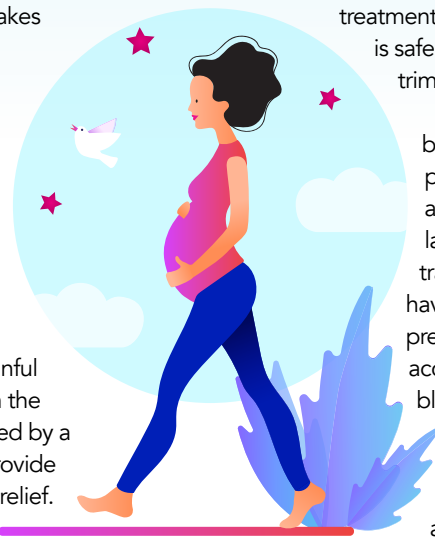
CONSIDER COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

Some research suggests that acupuncture might relieve back pain during pregnancy. Chiropractic treatment might provide comfort for some women as well. If you're considering a complementary therapy, discuss it with your healthcare provider. Be sure to tell the chiropractor or acupuncturist that you are pregnant.

KNOW WHEN TO CONSULT YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

If you have severe back pain during pregnancy or back pain that lasts more than 2 weeks, talk to your doctor or physical therapist. They may recommend other treatments or medication that is safe, depending on which trimester you are in.

Keep in mind that back pain during pregnancy might be a sign of preterm labour or a urinary tract infection. If you have back pain during pregnancy that's accompanied by vaginal bleeding, fever or burning during urination, contact your doctor right away.



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