

Remember:

- **DO NOT** tense the buttocks, abdomen, or legs.
- **CONTRACT** the muscles as you exhale (breathe out), then continue to breathe normally as you hold the squeeze.
- Completely **RELAX** the body before and after each exercise.
- **DO NOT tighten the muscles above your navel**
- **DO NOT pull in the whole of your tummy**

Equality Statement

At South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust we are fully committed to quality and diversity, both as an employer and as a service provider. We have a policy statement in our Equality Strategy that clearly outlines our commitment to equality for service users, patients and staff:

- You and your family have the right to be treated fairly and be routinely involved in decisions about your treatment and care. You can expect to be treated with dignity and respect. You will not be discriminated against on any grounds including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation
- You have a responsibility to treat other service users, patients and or staff with dignity and respect

Our information for patients can also be made available in other languages, Braille, audio tape, disc or in large print.

PALS

We offer a Patient Advice Liaison Service (PALS). This is a confidential service for families to help with any questions or concerns about local health services.

You can contact the service by the direct telephone line on 01926 600 054 by email: Pals@swft.nhs.uk or by calling in person to the PALS Office which is located in the Lakin Road Entrance to the hospital.

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Approved by
SWFT Patient
Information
Group

If you require any further information please contact: Women's health physiotherapist tel: 01926 608068

Physiotherapy service

Guidelines for back care during pregnancy

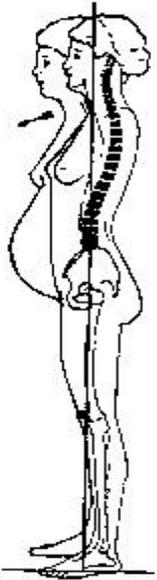
This leaflet provides advice for
managing back pain during pregnancy

Why does back pain occur during pregnancy?

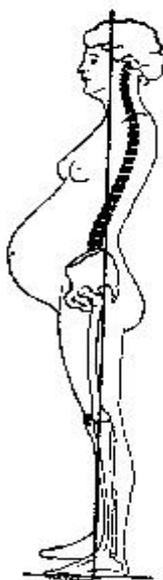
Back pain during pregnancy is extremely common. As your baby grows, your posture changes putting different stresses and strains on your joints and muscles around your back, hips and pelvis. This can cause aches and pains in your back.

There are many things you can do during pregnancy to help you deal with the changes to your body. Awareness of your posture and correct lifting techniques are important to prevent back pain. Exercises to keep your pelvic floor and tummy muscles strong and your back flexible can also help.

Good Posture



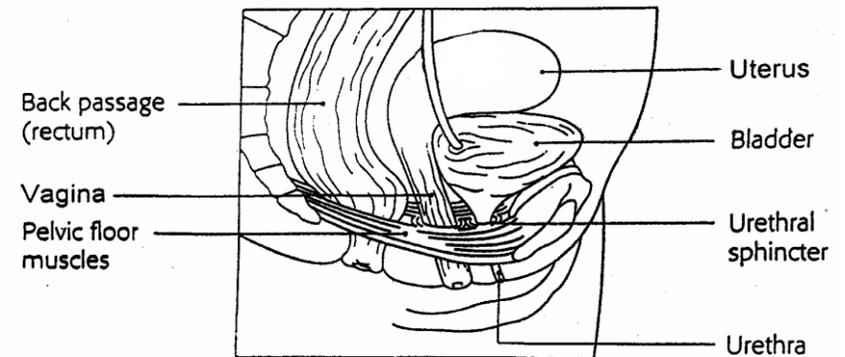
Bad Posture



Pelvic floor

During pregnancy it is important to do regular pelvic floor exercises. The pelvic floor muscles are layers of muscle in the base of your pelvis. During pregnancy and childbirth this dome of muscles can become flattened and weakened. The functions of the pelvic floor muscles are

- To provide support for the pelvic organs and developing baby
- To help maintain continence → 1 in 3 women will have some form of incontinence after having a baby – but pelvic floor exercises can prevent this.
- To assist sexual function



The exercises

1. Slowly tighten, lift, and draw up the pelvic floor muscles from the back, middle to the front. At first you may find this is almost impossible to do. Don't worry, just hold for one or two seconds. You will soon get better at it. Eventually your goal to hold for 10 seconds, rest for 5 seconds then repeat 10 times.
2. This is a brisk, snatching-type exercise - quickly tighten, lift up, and then fully relax your pelvic floor muscles. Make sure you completely relax before you do the next exercise. This exercise works the fast twitch muscle fibres that quickly shut off the flow of urine to help prevent accidents.

Exercise balls

The movement of an exercise ball allows you to move easily, allowing for small postural corrections while sitting, and reducing the stress on your spine. These corrections allow you to move your body in a gentle and controlled manner, reducing pain.

- Using the exercise ball throughout your pregnancy will stimulate postural reflexes and keep the deep supportive muscles of the spine strong
- In sitting- gently rotate your pelvis in circles. First clockwise and then anti-clockwise. Do this 10 times in each direction.
- In sitting- slowly tilt your pelvis forwards as you sit up tall. Hold for a few seconds and then slowly rock your pelvis back, into a slumped position. Repeat this exercise 10 times.



Lying over the ball

- Use a pillow under your chest to feel more comfortable
- Gently rock your hips from side to side. You should feel a stretch along the side of your back. Repeat this 10 times in each direction
- Gently rock your pelvis forwards and backwards. As you move your pelvis forwards your bottom will tuck underneath you. As you move your pelvis backwards you will feel your bottom rise up. Repeat this 10 times in each direction.

A medium size ball (65cms) will suit most people; if you are taller than 5'6 you may need a 75cms exercise ball.

Maintaining good posture

DO:

- When walking and standing, stand tall keep your back straight
- Keep shoulders down and back, not hunched
- If carrying shopping try to keep an equal weight in each hand - not too heavy!
- Bend at the knees to pick things up and keep your back straight
- When sitting, place a pillow lengthways behind your back to provide support all along your spine
- Try to keep flexible and do some form of light exercise e.g. swimming, walking, Pilates
- Keep weight gain under control by eating a sensible diet
- Get adequate rest and relaxation
- Wear flat shoes with good support
- Ask for a risk assessment at work if your job is causing you back pain
- When getting out of bed, off the settee or couch, roll onto your side, knees bent, push up with hands to sitting position and then swing both legs off together
- Sleep on your side with a small pillow between your knees

DO NOT:

- Balance a toddler on your hip when carrying them as this will throw your body off balance and may make your pain worse
- Continue what you are doing if you get pain
- Exaggerate the curve in your lower back
- Twist and bend sharply
- Stand or sit for long periods
- Lift heavy objects

Mobility exercises

During pregnancy, it is not uncommon for your lumbar spine (low back) to become stiff and sore. Follow the exercises outlined below (as discussed with your Physiotherapist) to help mobilise your back and hopefully improve your pain levels.

If your pain levels increase significantly when performing these exercises, wait until you next see your physiotherapist for further advice.

Knee Hugging

Lie on your back with your knees bent up. Slowly bring both knees in towards your tummy, allowing the knees to fall out slightly to accommodate your bump. Hold this position for 10-15 seconds. You should feel a stretch in your lower back. Repeat three times.



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Knee rolls/ trunk rotations

Start with your knees bent up as before. Gently take both knees over towards one side until you feel a stretch in your lower back. Hold for a few seconds and then slowly bring the knees back to the starting position. Repeat this exercise five times in each direction.



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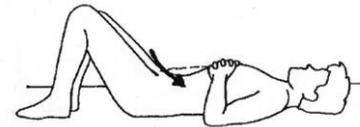
Pelvic Tilt

Position: Lying on back with knees bent

- A) Gently squeeze your pelvic floor and tilt your pelvis backwards (flattening your spine) then slowly tilt your pelvis forwards (increasing the arch in your back).

Do 10 repetitions of this exercise (back & forth). This will help to settle your stomach if you are suffering from cramps or wind.

- B) Gently tighten your lower abdominals and buttocks, then tilt your pelvis up and flatten your back on to the floor or bed. Hold this position for maximum of 10 seconds, then release gently.



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