

# **Pregnancy Related Pelvic and Back Pain**





Pregnancy related pelvic pain is common. It occurs in around 1 in 5 women.

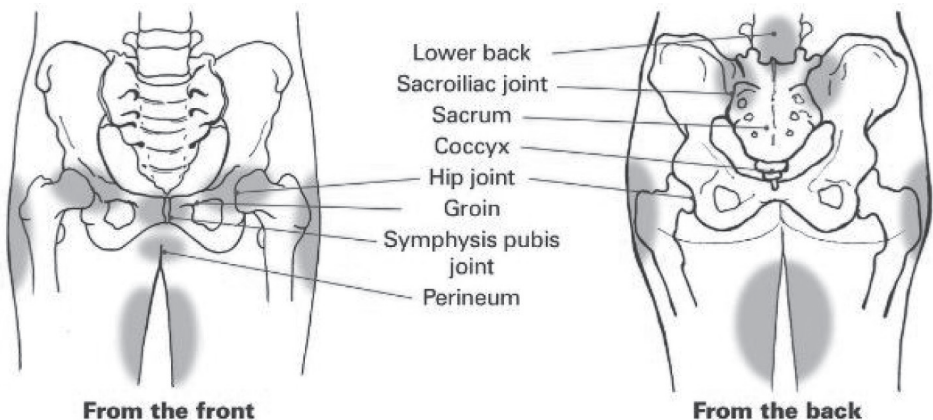
Commonly, this pain will subside in the first few months after delivery, especially if you maintain a low impact exercise regime for at least 12 weeks.

### **What causes pelvic or low back pain in pregnancy?**

- Previous lower back pain or previous pregnancies.
- Extra movement in the joints as ligaments relax due to hormonal changes, causing the joints to move unevenly.
- Weak muscles around the pelvis and tummy that decrease support around the joints .
- Extra load that you are carrying causing a change in posture as baby grows.

### **What are the symptoms?**

- Pain at the front or back of the pelvis, buttocks, groin and/or radiating into the thighs.
- Clicking, locking or grinding in the pelvic joints.
- Waddling or shuffling when walking.
- Pain and difficulty when opening legs.
- Pain in standing on one leg.
- Pain with walking, rolling in bed, climbing stairs and driving.
- Difficulty when getting up to start walking.
- Difficulty finding a comfortable position in bed.



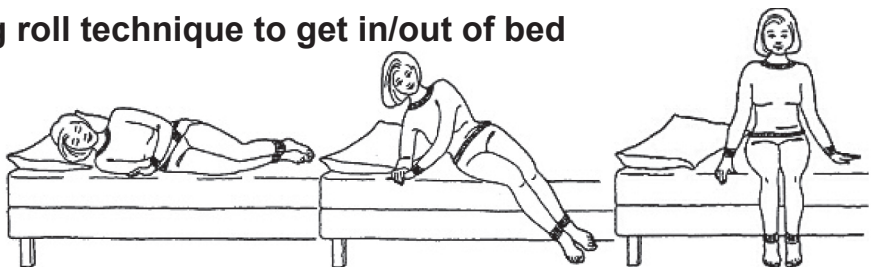
## What can make your pain worse?

- Prolonged or fast walking.
- Standing on one leg (e.g. when dressing).
- Opening your legs when getting in and out of the car or bed.
- High impact exercise (e.g. when running or jumping).
- Heavy household tasks (e.g. vacuuming, hanging washing, lifting).
- Lifting young children.
- Carrying young children on one hip.
- Sitting on the floor.

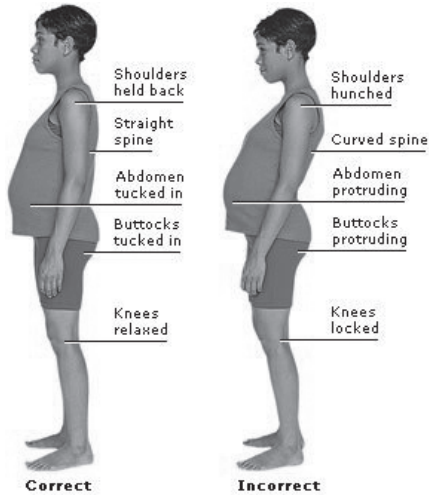
## What can help my pain?

- ✓ Frequent rests and changes in activity and position may relieve stress on the joints.
- ✓ Maintain good posture in sitting and standing – when sitting ensure your bottom is at the back of the chair and relax your lower back.
- ✓ Try to keep your legs together when getting in/out of the car.
- ✓ Try to log roll over in bed (see diagram below) – keep knees/feet together.
- ✓ Sleep with a small pillow between your legs to keep them parallel.
- ✓ Sit down to put on underwear, socks, shoes to avoid standing on one leg.
- ✓ Ask for help with household work and/or other children etc.
- ✓ Rest regularly.
- ✓ Take steps/stairs one at a time.
- ✓ Try and plan your day so you can avoid making your pain worse.
- ✓ Pace yourself throughout the day, take rests when needed.
- ✓ Use a backpack rather than a handbag to balance your weight.
- ✓ Carrying your toddler in front rather than on the side. If possible avoid carrying them at all.
- ✓ Use an ice pack on your painful area to reduce pain. Wrap an ice pack in a damp cloth and apply for no more than 20 minutes at a time.

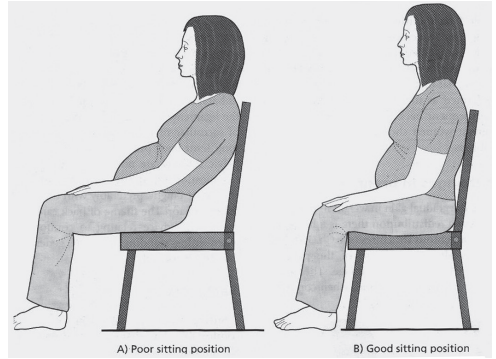
## Log roll technique to get in/out of bed



## Standing posture



## Sitting posture



## Support Belt

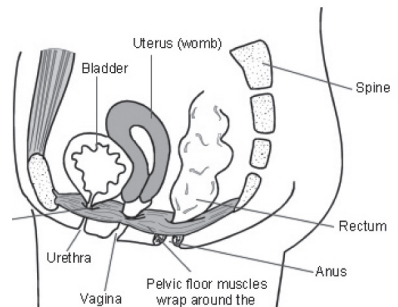
- A pelvic support belt can provide extra stability across the pelvis and reduce your pain.
- For more information on purchasing, please see Smileybelt leaflet included in this letter.
- A smiley belt will be most useful if you use it along side the information and exercises in this booklet.



## Exercises to help your pain

### Pelvic Floor exercises

These muscles are very important as they support the bladder, womb and bowel. Lying or sitting is the easiest way to start doing pelvic floor exercises. There are 2 ways to help exercise your pelvic floor muscles these are:



### To build endurance and strength

- Start gently breathing in and out of your tummy.
- As you breathe out gently tighten and draw around your back passage as if you are stopping wind, then draw up your muscles at the front as if you are trying to stop passing urine.

- Try to hold the lift as you breathe out. You may only manage a couple of seconds, with practice you can build to 10 seconds.
- It is important to feel the let go of the muscles as you relax otherwise you may over tighten the muscles or they may have relaxed without your awareness.
- Repeat 10 times. You may need a rest between each hold

**To make muscles work quickly when you need them (cough, sneeze, laugh)**

- As you breathe out, tighten and draw in the pelvic floor muscles as above as strongly and quickly as you can and then let go.
- Aim for 10 in a row; a short break between each one can help initially.

**Sometimes other muscles will try to switch on while doing the exercises but it is important that you:**

- Do not squeeze your big muscles of your bottom
- Do not tighten your abdominal muscles
- Do not hold your breath

No one should be able to tell that you are doing the exercises.

Aim to do the exercises three times a day.

**Pelvic Tilting exercises:**

These can be done in sitting, standing or lying.

**In lying:** pull in the stomach muscles and try to flatten the small of your back. Hold 5 secs, repeat 5 times, throughout the day.

**In sitting and standing:** place your hands under your bump.

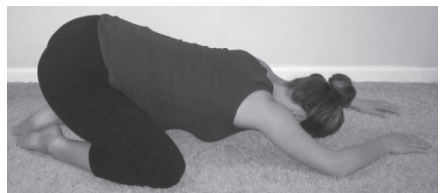
As you breathe out, draw your lower tummy muscles in towards your spine. The weight of your bump should lift from your hands.

Repeat 5 times – 3 times a day.



**Childs pose:**

Tailbone towards ceiling shoulders and back relaxed. Breathe quietly into your tummy. Hold this position for 10-15 breaths.



## General Advice

- Don't do any activity that increases your pain.
- It is important to try to maintain a good posture during pregnancy and to do this your stomach muscles or 'core' needs to be strong. The pelvic floor and tilting exercises above will help with this.
- Gentle walking on the flat is ok as long as this is not making your pain worse.
- Swimming or exercising in the pool is an excellent form of exercise – especially if your back/pelvis pain is limiting your walking. Walking in the pool (forwards, backwards and sideways) as well as gentle exercises such as squats, heel raises and marching are also good.
- You should avoid hot pools and water temperature should be below 30°.
- Low impact exercise groups tailored to pregnancy and conducted by a trained health professional are another safe way to exercise. See links at the bottom for further information.
- You are able to continue regular exercise during pregnancy. It is useful to check with your doctor or midwife before starting up a new exercise programme whilst pregnant.
- Avoid activities that cause overheating e.g. vigorous high impact exercise, spas, saunas.

*The Bay of Plenty District Health Board has an active commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi  
and the improvement of Māori health.*

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