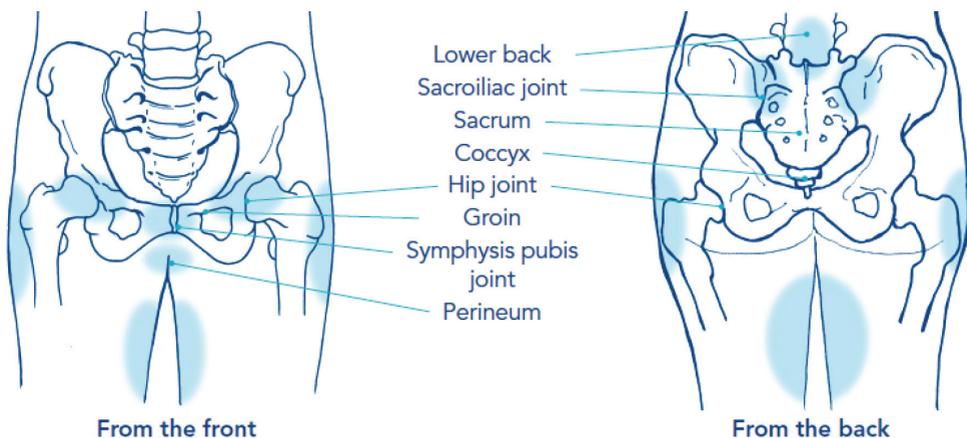


Pelvic Girdle and Low Back Pain in Pregnancy

The pelvis consists of three bones and three joints; one joint is at the front (the pubic symphysis) and two are at the back (sacroiliac joints). The spine consists of bones called vertebrae that are stacked on top of each other. The joints of the pelvis and spine are supported by ligaments and muscles, which provide stability and help us to maintain a good posture.

Hormonal changes during pregnancy can cause the ligaments to become more flexible allowing more joint movement. This flexibility combined with the additional weight gain of pregnancy may give rise to pain and make women more prone to sprains and strains. The increased flexibility can last until a few months after pregnancy and/or finishing breastfeeding.

There are no clear reasons why some women have pain and others don't. Please see below for a diagram illustrating the most common sites of pain.



Experiences of pregnancy related pelvic and back pain can be very individual. Activities that some women find painful, others won't. Listen to your own body; if you know a particular activity causes discomfort try to avoid or stop the activity where practical.

Will my pain get worse as I get bigger?

Not necessarily. Pain may come and go as your pregnancy progresses, this is normal! You may experience flare ups that are linked to a growth spurt or a particularly busy day. Sometimes there is no obvious reason for an increase in symptoms.

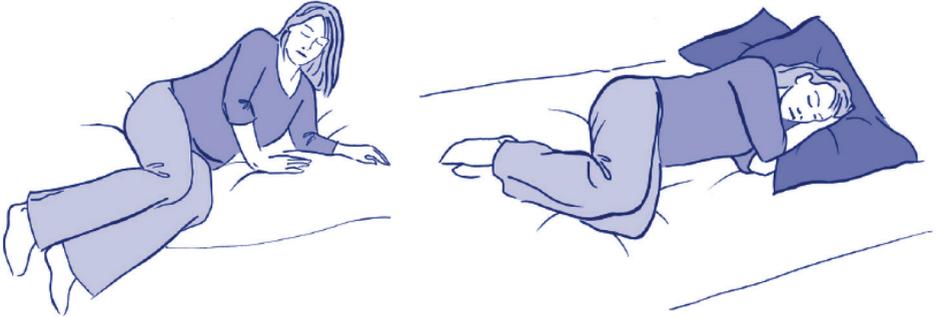
Will my pain go after I've had my baby?

For the majority of women pain gets better in the few weeks after childbirth. For a few, symptoms may linger for longer. For example, some women find their symptoms return with their first period or when they increase activity levels. Beware of reading internet stories of on-going postnatal pain. These are often unusual situations and are very rare, so try not to worry!

What practical things can I do to manage day to day living?

- Activities that cause one side of the pelvis to move up and down (e.g. walking, climbing stairs) and/or activities that cause each side of the pelvis to move in opposite directions (e.g. getting in/out of bed, swimming breaststroke) may strain the joints and ligaments of the pelvis and cause pain.
- Try to avoid twisting and sudden movements.
- To help support your pelvic joints when doing activities that aggravate your symptoms, try lifting your pelvic floor and squeezing your buttocks together.
- Only do essential lifting. Remember, the more you carry, the more strain on your lower back and pelvis. Sit down and encourage your toddler to climb up onto you to help reduce lifting.

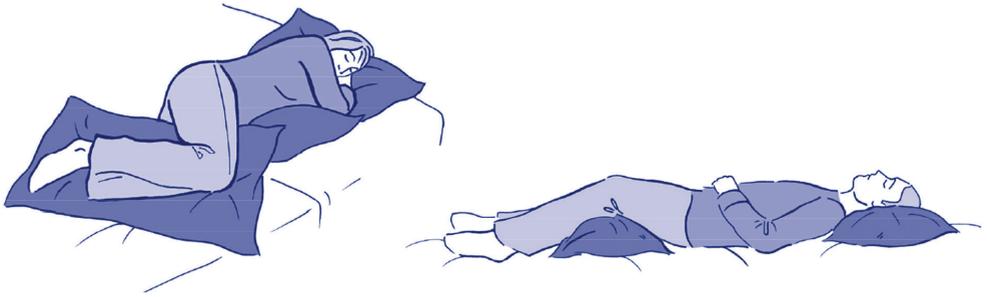
- When getting out of bed, bend up both knees, roll onto your side and push your body up by pressing your upper hand into the bed and let your feet go down to the floor. To get into bed, sit on the side of the bed and lower your head and shoulders onto the pillow, keep your knees bent and together and lift both legs onto the bed at the same time.



- Silky nightwear may help when turning in bed.
- A duvet under your bottom bed sheet may help to cushion your hips.
- To reduce discomfort when getting in and out of the car, put your bottom on the seat first and then bring both legs in together. This will reduce strain to the pelvic joints.
- When at all possible, REST! Take the weight off of your pelvis and lower back by sitting or lying down. Sit down to perform jobs you would normally stand for e.g. ironing, preparing food. Remember; never stand when you can sit and never sit when you can lie!

What should I do if I get a flare up?

- Don't panic! Flare ups are common during pregnancy and the process of getting better.
- Soothe the pain. Note the things that ease your pain. A massage, warm bath or heat pad may be helpful. Some people find using an ice pack for 10 minutes at a time helps.
- Relaxation. Using relaxation techniques such as breathing exercises, relaxation CD's and gentle yoga may all help.



- Distraction. Being able to take your focus away from the pain and thinking about something else can be helpful.
- Reduce activities and use pacing to return to gentle activity.
- Pain relief. Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to advise you on medication appropriate for you.
- Stretch. Tight muscles are a common source of unnecessary pain. Gentle controlled stretching can help release any muscle spasm.

Useful websites and resources

Pelvic Obstetric and Gynaecological Physiotherapy

pogp.csp.org.uk

Pelvic Partnership

www.pelvicpartnership.org.uk

Telephone 01235 820921

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)

www.csp.org.uk;

Telephone 020 730 66666

<http://www.csp.org.uk/publications/personal-training-your-pelvic-floor>

Please contact the physiotherapy department if you require any further information.

Royal Sussex County Hospital Telephone: 01273 523050

Hove Polyclinic Telephone: 0300 304 0118

Brighton General Hospital Telephone: 01273 665111

Princess Royal Hospital Telephone: 01444 448664

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The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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