

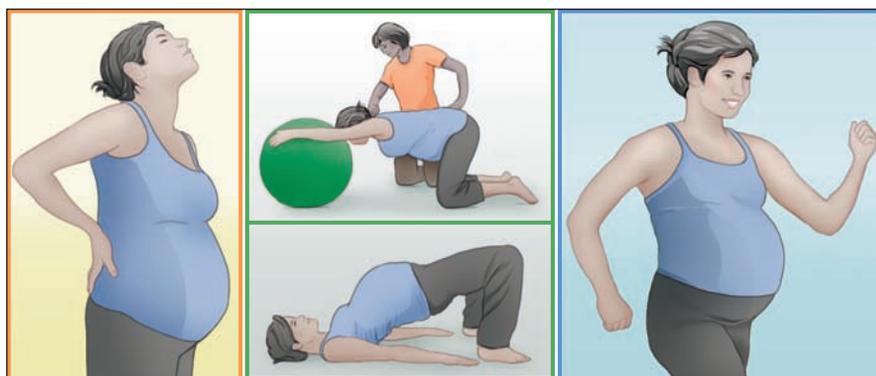
Pregnancy and Low Back Pain

Physical Therapy Can Reduce Back and Pelvic Pain During and After Pregnancy

J Orthop Sports Phys Ther 2014;44(7):474. doi:10.2519/jospt.2014.0505

Experts estimate that anywhere from 24% to 90% of women experience low back or pelvic-region pain when they are pregnant. Many women find that this pain goes away when the baby is born. However, more than a third of women still have pain 1 year after giving birth. Physical therapy during and after pregnancy can help decrease low back and pelvic pain. Common treatment options

include education, exercise therapy, manual therapy, braces, or a combination of these treatments. Learning new ways to perform home and work activities as well as relaxation techniques can help ease the pain. A study published in the July 2014 issue of *JOSPT* reviewed the best published research to better understand the benefits of physical therapy in treating women with back and pelvic pain during and after pregnancy.



PREGNANCY-RELATED LOW BACK AND PELVIC PAIN. Pregnancy can result in low back or pelvic pain. Education and exercises help ease this pain for most women. Exercises focused on the muscles around the spine and pelvic floor as well as strength training, aerobic exercise, and balance training appear to work best.

For this and more topics, visit *JOSPT* Perspectives for Patients online at www.jospt.org.

This Perspectives article was written by a team of *JOSPT*'s editorial board and staff, with Deydre S. Teyhen, PT, PhD, Editor, and Jeanne Robertson, Illustrator.

This *JOSPT* Perspectives for Patients is based on an article by van Bente et al, titled "Recommendations for Physical Therapists on the Treatment of Lumbopelvic Pain During Pregnancy: A Systematic Review," *J Orthop Sports Phys Ther* 2014;44(7):464-473. Epub 10 May 2014. doi:10.2519/jospt.2014.5098

NEW INSIGHTS

The authors reviewed medical research published between 1992 and 2013. From the 1284 articles they found, the authors picked the best 22 studies that measured the impact of physical therapy treatments on pregnant women. The authors did not review articles that treated back pain during pregnancy with medication, surgery, or acupuncture. They found that exercises can decrease pain, improve function, and limit sick leave for pregnancy-related back and pelvic pain. Effective exercises often focus on strengthening the muscles around the spine and pelvic floor. Exercises can also include water aerobics, general strength training, endurance exercises, and balance training. Finally, some research found that combining education, manual therapy, and bracing can be helpful. However, too few studies on this approach have been published to be certain about its benefits.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Some people believe that back and pelvic pain during pregnancy will get better once the baby is born. However, that is not the case for at least a third of women. If you have low back or pelvic pain during or after pregnancy, education and exercise therapy can help. Your physical therapist can teach you the right exercises and explain how to alter the way you perform some activities to best reduce your pain. Your therapist can also help you decide whether other treatments, such as manual therapy or braces, might be helpful. After a thorough evaluation, your physical therapist will customize a treatment program that will work best for you. Usually, you can do the exercises at home. For more information on the treatment of low back and pelvic pain during and after pregnancy, contact your physical therapist specializing in women's health and musculoskeletal disorders.



JOSPT PERSPECTIVES FOR PATIENTS is a public service of the *Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy*. The information and recommendations contained here are a summary of the referenced research article and are not a substitute for seeking proper health care to diagnose and treat this condition. For more information on the management of this condition, contact your physical therapist or health care provider specializing in musculoskeletal disorders. *JOSPT* Perspectives for Patients may be photocopied noncommercially by physical therapists and other health care providers to share with patients. The official journal of the Orthopaedic Section and the Sports Physical Therapy Section of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), *JOSPT* strives to offer high-quality research, immediately applicable clinical material, and useful supplemental information on musculoskeletal and sports-related health, injury, and rehabilitation. Copyright ©2014 *Journal of Orthopaedic & Sports Physical Therapy*®