



8 Ways to Prevent and Alleviate Back Pain During Pregnancy



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8 Ways to Avoid Back Pain During Pregnancy



During pregnancy, many women experience discomfort in their backs due to the added weight of their stomachs and the strain on their spines. The body also produces a hormone called relaxin, which helps prepare the body for childbirth by loosening ligaments, making pregnant women more susceptible to injury, particularly in the back.

Back pain is common during pregnancy, especially in the later months, and it can be quite distressing. However, it's important not to dismiss your aches and pains as part of the normal pregnancy experience. You can do several things to prevent or alleviate back pain during pregnancy.

Causes of Back Pain

Fluctuations in weight, changes in posture, and pregnancy hormones can all contribute to back pain during pregnancy. The hormone relaxin, in particular, causes ligament laxity, especially where the pelvis and spine meet. This loosening of ligaments is necessary to prepare the baby for birth but can also cause joint instability and back pain.

As the baby's weight increases, so does the strain on the spine and pelvic regions. Most women gain between 25 and 35 pounds during pregnancy, and as the uterus expands, it shifts the center of gravity, leading to postural changes and putting additional strain on the back.

Diagnosis of Back Pain

The risks to the developing fetus may limit the ability to diagnose back pain during pregnancy. Due to these concerns, healthcare providers may be hesitant to perform imaging tests on pregnant women.

The best way to diagnose back pain is by taking a comprehensive history of the symptoms and performing a thorough examination to assess the function of the spinal muscles, joints, and nerves. X-rays are avoided during fetal development, especially between 8 and 15 weeks, due to the high dose of exposure to the fetus. Fluoroscopy and CT scans are also generally avoided due to the potential risks.

While MRI imaging can be done more safely during pregnancy, it is generally avoided due to potential risks.

Preventing and Alleviating Back Pain During Pregnancy

- Exercise Regularly

Regular physical activity can help strengthen the muscles that support your back and legs, improve flexibility, and promote better posture. Focus on gentle movements that are not painful. Physical therapy programs often emphasize improving posture, increasing range of motion, flexibility, and muscle strength.

- Lift Correctly

Avoid lifting heavy objects or seek help when lifting large items. If you need to lift something, do not bend over from the waist. Instead, use your legs to lift by squatting with your legs bent and your back straight.

- Avoid Wearing High Heels

Opt for low-heeled shoes with arch support. High heels and flat shoes should be avoided. Your doctor may recommend using specific shoe insoles to help treat low back pain.

- Consider Complementary Techniques

Be sure first to obtain clearance from your doctor. Techniques such as meditation, acupuncture, massage, osteopathic manipulative therapy, and chiropractic treatments by a practitioner specializing in pregnancy are considered safe.

- Sleep on Your Left Side

Sleep on your side with one or both legs bent. You may also find placing a pillow between your legs and another under your tummy helpful. Ensure you get adequate sleep as well.

- Wear Supportive Belts

Wearing a pregnancy support belt can provide extra abdominal and back support. Additionally, you can place a small cushion behind your lower back or use chairs with adequate back

support.

- Apply Cold Packs

Use a heating pad wrapped in a towel to avoid burns and apply it to the affected area for a maximum of 20 minutes. Cold packs can also help relieve back pain.

- Maintain Good Posture

Stand or sit up straight, and avoid long periods of sitting or standing. If you need to stand for an extended period, try placing one foot on a stool or a box to help relieve back tension.

Conclusion

Back pain usually resolves on its own after childbirth. However, if you experience back pain that persists for more than two weeks during your pregnancy, consult your doctor. They can help confirm or rule out any underlying issues and provide appropriate medical or other interventions.