



Mercy Health
Care first

Your important health information

Physiotherapy at MHW

What is Physiotherapy?

Physiotherapy can help to improve or restore movement and function when you or your child are affected by an injury, illness or a medical or physical condition.

Physiotherapy uses physical techniques, education and advice, as well as tailored exercise to improve movement, reduce pain, speed up the healing process and improve quality of life.

Why have I been referred for Physiotherapy?

The MHW Physiotherapy Department offers assessment and management of a range of Pelvic health and paediatric conditions.

Your doctor, midwife or other MHW health professional has referred you or your child to Physiotherapy for assessment and treatment of an injury, illness or medical or physical condition.

What to expect from a Physiotherapy appointment:

Your physiotherapist will be interested to understand the current history and the nature of you or your child's condition and how all symptoms relate together. They will ask about you or your child's goals of therapy and help to establish realistic timeframes for these. Your Physiotherapist may conduct a physical examination with your permission.

How to get the most out of my Physiotherapy appointments:

After you or your child's assessment is completed, there should be a clear plan regarding expectations of Physiotherapy to help you or your child to achieve your goals.

Physiotherapy management may include lifestyle changes and participation in a home exercise program.

You will be expected to take an active role in therapy and to work with your Physiotherapist on the strategies discussed. You will be supported by your Physiotherapist to self-manage you or your child's condition.

Other important information

- **It is important that if you need to cancel or change your appointment that you contact the Physiotherapy Department as soon as possible on (03) 8458 4141.**
- **If you fail to attend your first Physiotherapy appointment, please note all further appointments will be cancelled and you will be discharged from the service.**
- **If you fail to attend your follow up Physiotherapy appointment on 2 occasions, all further appointments will be cancelled and you will be discharged from the service.**



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Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

Physiotherapy Department

Mercy Hospital for Women

Phone 03 8458 4141



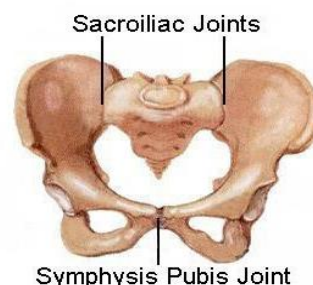
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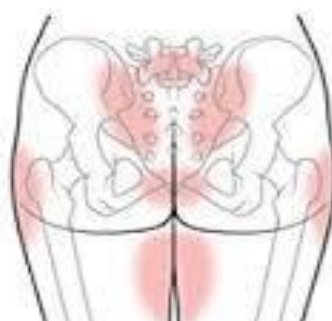
Pregnancy – related pelvic girdle pain (PRPGP)

What is pregnancy-related pelvic girdle gain?

- The pelvic girdle is the ring of bones at the base of your spine with three large joints – the symphysis pubis and the left and right sacroiliac joints (see diagram right).
- Pain may occur in these joints together or separately and may radiate to the upper thigh or groin (see shaded areas below)



Front



Back

- Approximately 40% of Australian women experience pelvic girdle pain to some degree during their pregnancy.
- PRPGP may impact your ability to work, perform your activities of daily living and look after your other children. It can cause stress and lower your quality of life.

Your pelvis is strong and stable in pregnancy.

- The pelvis is resilient and adaptable to the demands of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare.
- Postural and pelvic structural changes are normal, safe and necessary to support the growing demands of pregnancy and childbirth.
- The pelvic ligaments do not soften with hormonal changes, however joint structures may become more sensitive in pregnancy.

What factors may increase my risk of PRPGP?

- Previous history of pelvic trauma, low back pain, and/or pelvic girdle pain
- Increased BMI
- History of smoking
- Psychosocial considerations (work dissatisfaction)
- Lack of belief of improvement in symptoms



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Your important take home information

Will my pain improve?

- Yes, pelvic girdle pain can be self-managed with a combination of lifestyle changes and exercise. It can improve in pregnancy and most women have complete resolution of their symptoms with birth of their baby or by the time their baby is six months old.
- We have developed a series of videos which contain valuable information about your health and fitness during your pregnancy
- Access videos via the QR code or follow the link:
 - Pregnancy-related back and pelvic pain <https://vimeo.com/449984064/236515cb47>
 - Moving during pregnancy <https://vimeo.com/449984653/e9f68d3337>



How can I modify my lifestyle and activities to reduce my pain?

- Feel reassured that your pain can improve.
- Don't push through the pain.
- Make sure you are getting enough rest and sleep, ideally 8 hours per night.
- Take smaller steps when walking and/or walk shorter distances.
- Break up large tasks into smaller activities.
- Rest between activities.
- Try sleeping on your side with a pillow between your legs.
- Keep your knees together when rolling in bed, try rolling under or over.
- Keep your knees together when changing position such as getting in and out of the car and bed (see diagram right).
- Avoid crossing your legs when sitting.
- Avoid standing on one leg for example sit down to put your pants on.
- Avoid stairs – take the lift, if there is no lift available take one step at a time or step up sideways.





Your important take home message

What exercises and self-management strategies can I try to relieve pain?

- **Perform exercises** to stretch and strengthen your spine, buttocks and pelvic floor muscles. Regular short sessions of movement are often better than long exercise sessions.
- **Change posture or position at work regularly.** Set a reminder in your phone to move or stretch every 1-2hours.
- **Allow time for mindfulness/meditation or guided relaxation** to reduce stress, tension and to calm your body in pregnancy.
- **Try an ice pack** on the painful area for 10-20minutes every two to three hours. Wrap the ice in a cloth so the ice pack does not contact your skin directly.
- **Try a heat pack** on tight painful muscle for 20minutes as required, to reduce muscle tension. Carefully follow the instructions provided with your heat pack to prevent burns.
- **Use self-massage** or ask your partner to gently release tight muscles.
- **Perform low-impact general exercise** such as water (aqua) exercise, swimming with gentle kicking, or exercise bike (discuss these options with your physiotherapist).

Remember to consult your medical care provider for advice about taking pain medication during pregnancy.

What if I have tried all of these strategies, can I see a Women's Health Physiotherapist?

- You can ask your medical care provider for a referral to a Women's Health Physiotherapist.
- We will triage your referral to make sure you have watched the Pregnancy videos and practised some of the strategies suggested in this handout prior to your appointment.
- The physiotherapist will then assess you and make further recommendations about how to manage your pregnancy related pelvic girdle pain.
- These may include specific exercises, lifestyle changes and/or support.
- Some women find the use of external supports like belts and bands provides proprioceptive input which can help to relax muscles and in turn reduce pain.
- Some women require the short-term use of crutches or a wheelchair.

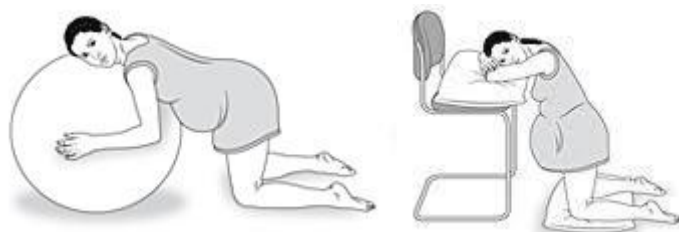


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Your important take home message

How can I manage my pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain during labour?

- Let the medical team know you have had pelvic girdle pain in your pregnancy.
- Practice comfortable positions before you go into labour so you are familiar with them.
- Avoid positions with your legs wide apart or where there is more weight on one leg. See diagram below for positions to try



(Images sourced from RWH website 2013)

What about after the birth?

- Approximately 90% of women have no pelvic girdle pain by the time their baby is six months old.
- If pain continues you may use an ice pack or your hot pack after birth.
- Try to rest lying down rather than sitting up in a chair to assist your recovery.
- Continue your stretching and mobility exercises in the post-natal period.
- Use your compression garment, support belt and/or crutches if required, and bring these to the hospital for use after birth.
- Move within the limits of your pain.
- **If your pain persists, speak to your health care provider or GP about accessing a physiotherapist in your local community.**

Further Information

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact:

Physiotherapy Department

Mercy Hospital for Women

Phone: 03 8458 4141

Werribee Mercy Hospital

Phone: 03 8754 3150

Acknowledgements

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REFRAMING BELIEFS ABOUT PREGNANCY- RELATED PELVIC GIRDLE PAIN

Pulsifer J, Britnell S, Sim A,
Adaszynski J, Dufour S



**THE STRONGEST
PREDICTOR OF
RESOLUTION OF
PREGNANCY-RELATED
PELVIC GIRDLE PAIN (PPGP)
IS HAVING THE BELIEF
THAT IT WILL GO AWAY**



STABLE

The pelvis is resilient and adaptable to the demands of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare while maintaining its stable structure.



SAFE

Postural and pelvic structural changes are normal, safe and necessary to support the growing demands of pregnancy and childbirth.



SELF MANAGEABLE

Pain education, emotional wellbeing, sleep optimization, exercise and external supports that promote independence are the most helpful strategies to reduce pelvic girdle pain.

