



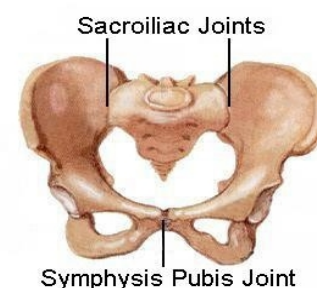
Mercy Health
Care first

Your important health information

Pregnancy - related pelvic girdle pain (PRPGP)

What is pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain?

- Pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain (PRPGP) is pain in the pelvic joints that may develop during or after pregnancy
- 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).
- Approximately 20% of women experience pelvic girdle pain during their pregnancy.



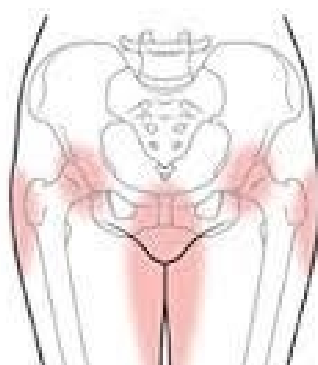
What may cause PRPGP?

- Changes to your posture and centre of gravity as your baby grows.
- Stretching of your abdominal and pelvic floor muscles which provide support to your back and pelvis.
- Increased load on your pelvic joints, muscles and ligaments due to the weight of your growing baby.
- Hormonal changes which soften the supportive ligaments of the pelvis.

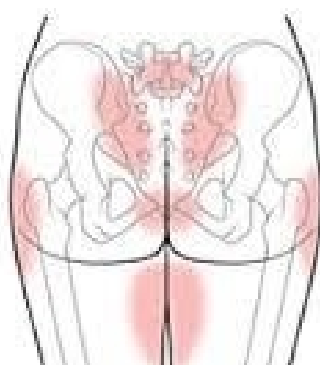
What symptoms might I feel?

- Pain in the front of the pelvis (pubic symphysis, groin) and/or the back of the pelvis (sacroiliac joints, buttocks and/or radiating thigh pain).
- Clicking, locking or grinding of the pelvic joints.
- Pain with position changes, prolonged sitting or prolonged standing.
- Reduced ability to perform your daily activities.

The shaded areas on the picture below show where pain commonly occurs.



Front



Back

How can I modify my activities to avoid increasing my pain?

- Don't push through the pain.
- Avoid or modify activities that are painful for you.
- Take smaller steps when walking.
- Walk shorter distances.
- Reduce heavy lifting, pushing and pulling activities such as vacuuming.
- Break up large tasks into smaller activities.
- Rest between activities.
- Sleep 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.
- Use your arms to support your weight – lean on a pram, shopping trolley or desk chair with wheels.
- Some women require the short-term use of crutches or a wheelchair.



How can I manage my pain?

- Ask your medical care provider for a referral to a Women's Health physiotherapist. The physiotherapist will assess you and make recommendations about how to manage your pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain. It is important you are assessed by a physiotherapist before starting any exercises.
- **Perform exercises** for the buttocks, pelvic floor and deep abdominals (as shown by your physiotherapist).
- Tighten your pelvic floor muscles **before** and **during** a cough, sneeze, lift or when pushing or pulling objects.
- **Use an ice pack** on the painful area for 20 minutes every two to three hours. Wrap the ice pack in a cloth so the ice pack does not contact your skin directly.
- **Use a heat pack** on tight painful muscles for 20 minutes as required, to reduce muscle tension/spasm. Carefully follow the instructions provided with your heat pack to prevent burns.
- **Use self-massage or trigger points** to release tight muscles (as shown by your physiotherapist).

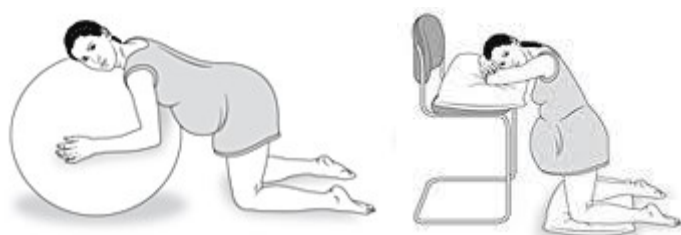
- **Ensure good posture** – stand tall throughout the day and sit tall in a chair with back support.
- **Bend your knees** and use your powerful leg muscles when lifting.
- Wear a **compression garment** or **pelvic joint support belt** (supplied by your physiotherapist).
- **Perform low-impact general exercise** such as water (aqua) exercise, swimming with gentle kicking, or exercise bike (discuss these options with your physiotherapist).
- If your pain is severe you may be prescribed crutches or a wheelchair.

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

My exercise program

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)

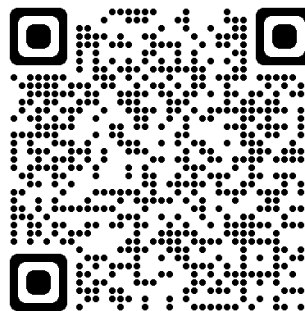
What about after the birth?

- Approximately 90% of women have no pelvic girdle pain by the time their baby is six months old.
- Continue to use an ice pack on the painful area for 20 minutes every two to three hours.
- Rest lying down rather than sitting up in a chair.
- Use your compression garment, support belt and/or crutches if required to bring these to the hospital for use after birth.
- Move within the limits of your pain.

If your PRPGP pain persists, speak to your health care provider about accessing a physiotherapist in your local community.

Additional resources

We have developed a series of videos which contain valuable information about your health and fitness during your pregnancy.



Access videos via this QR code or follow the link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsPvysJbVI2NcR35i658tN3Llv4qOpfaz>

Further Information

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

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Acknowledgements

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This document provides general information only and is not intended to replace advice about your health from a qualified practitioner. If you are concerned about your health, you should seek advice from a qualified practitioner.