

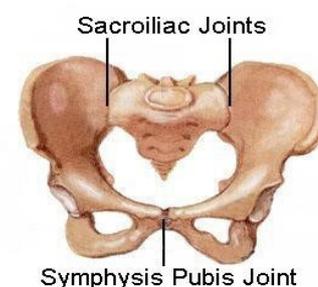


## Your important health information

# 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).

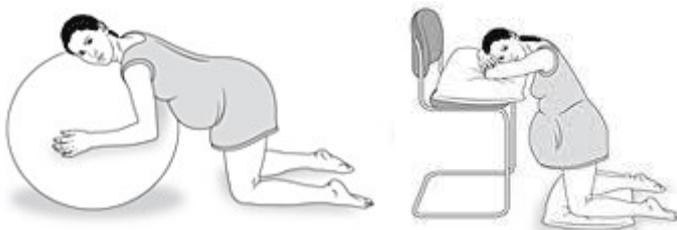
- **Ensure good posture** – stand tall throughout the day and sit tall in a chair with back support.
- **Bend your knees** and use your powerful leg muscles when lifting.
- Wear a **compression garment** or **pelvic joint support belt** (supplied by your physiotherapist).
- **Perform low-impact general 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)

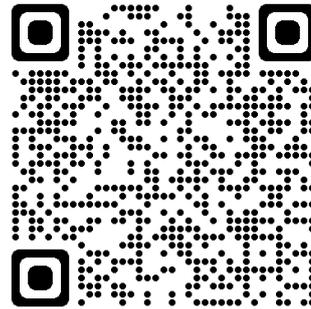
## What about after the birth?

- 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:

#### Physiotherapy

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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.