

Back pain and pregnancy

Critical Care Services

Your back changes during pregnancy. It is important you know how to look after it both during and after pregnancy.

What happens to my back during pregnancy?

During pregnancy, your body produces hormones which cause the ligaments in your body to become softer and stretch to prepare you for labour. This can put a strain on the joints of your lower back and pelvis, which can cause back pain.

Back pain is very common in pregnancy. It is therefore important to know how to look after your back during and after pregnancy.

How can I look after my back?

Try these tips:

- Avoid lifting heavy objects. If you do, use your knees and keep your back straight when you lift things up
- Move your feet when you turn to avoid twisting your spine
- Wear flat shoes
- Keep your back straight and well supported when sitting
- Use a maternity support pillow, or a supportive mattress
- A massage or warm bath may help

What can I do if I have back pain?

Back pain can have a big impact on your day to day life.

You can try:

- Regular stretches
- A referral to a physiotherapist for special exercises (you will need a referral from your GP)
- Over the counter medication, such as paracetamol, either on its own or combined with codeine. Do not take aspirin or similar drugs such as ibuprofen without the guidance of your GP

Always talk to your GP or midwife if you have any concerns, or are considering starting medication.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Will labour affect my back?

Back ache is very common in labour. There is no conclusive evidence that back pain is made worse by labour. The majority of women who experience back pain are able to experience labour as initially planned.

If you do suffer with back pain, it is important to let your midwife or doctor know so they can support you during labour. This may be either by helping your position during labour or providing you with extra pain relief.

If your back significantly affects your mobility then you may not be able to use the birthing pool or specific equipment e.g., a peanut ball.

Can I have an epidural?

An epidural is an effective method of pain relief during labour. Women who experience back ache often find that the epidural helps both labour pains and their back. If you have had a back operation, or have a back abnormality e.g., a curved spine, it can be more difficult to place the epidural.

All epidurals have a chance of not providing full effective pain relief. If you have had a back operation, then this chance can be higher. There is no evidence to suggest that an epidural, when sited correctly, is less likely to be effective.

There is a chance of developing a headache with any epidural, and this chance is slightly increased if you have had previous back surgery.

Your anaesthetist will fully discuss your options to help provide the most suitable pain relief for you.

What about a spinal?

A spinal is an injection in your back which is commonly used for delivery via forceps for a Caesarian section. The needle is smaller than an epidural needle and it is usually a single injection.

The majority of women with back problems are safely able to have spinal injections however it may take longer for it to be performed.

What is the risk of developing chronic back pain from a spinal or epidural?

There is no current evidence that associates long term back ache from spinals or epidurals.

It is common for your back to be sore for a few days at the point of the injection site. This is temporary and should settle with regular pain relief.

Unfortunately, some women do go on to develop long term back pain after delivery, whether they have previously had back pain or not. There are a number of reasons for this including postural and hormonal changes. The hormones in your body that make the ligaments relax can take up to 6 months to return to pre-pregnancy levels.

It is therefore vital that you look after your back after the pregnancy in the same manner as you did during.

Should I be worried about my back pain?

In some instances, back pain may be a symptom of another problem. Always seek advice if you are worried, especially if you:

- Are in your second or third trimester - this could be a sign of early labour
- Have back pain that is sudden and moves e.g., from front to back, or up to your shoulders
- Have associated weight loss or fever
- Are worried about your baby
- Are having difficulty with your bladder or bowel movements
- Have weakness or changes in sensation in the lower half of your body

Always talk to your doctor, midwife or anaesthetist if you have any concerns.

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。