

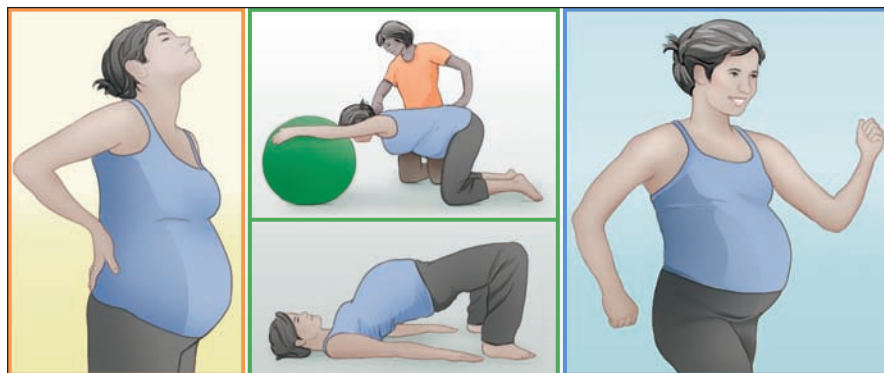
Pregnancy and Low Back Pain

Physical Therapy Can Reduce Back and Pelvic Pain During and After Pregnancy

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Experts estimate that anywhere from 24% to 90% of women experience low back or pelvic-region pain when they are pregnant. Many women find that this pain goes away when the baby is born. However, more than a third of women still have pain 1 year after giving birth. Physical therapy during and after pregnancy can help decrease low back and pelvic pain. Common treatment options

include education, exercise therapy, manual therapy, braces, or a combination of these treatments. Learning new ways to perform home and work activities as well as relaxation techniques can help ease the pain. A study published in the July 2014 issue of *JOSPT* reviewed the best published research to better understand the benefits of physical therapy in treating women with back and pelvic pain during and after pregnancy.



PREGNANCY-RELATED LOW BACK AND PELVIC PAIN. Pregnancy can result in low back or pelvic pain. Education and exercises help ease this pain for most women. Exercises focused on the muscles around the spine and pelvic floor as well as strength training, aerobic exercise, and balance training appear to work best.

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This Perspectives article was written by a team of *JOSPT*'s editorial board and staff, with Deydre S. Teyhen, PT, PhD, Editor, and Jeanne Robertson, Illustrator.

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NEW INSIGHTS

The authors reviewed medical research published between 1992 and 2013. From the 1284 articles they found, the authors picked the best 22 studies that measured the impact of physical therapy treatments on pregnant women. The authors did not review articles that treated back pain during pregnancy with medication, surgery, or acupuncture. They found that exercises can decrease pain, improve function, and limit sick leave for pregnancy-related back and pelvic pain. Effective exercises often focus on strengthening the muscles around the spine and pelvic floor. Exercises can also include water aerobics, general strength training, endurance exercises, and balance training. Finally, some research found that combining education, manual therapy, and bracing can be helpful. However, too few studies on this approach have been published to be certain about its benefits.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Some people believe that back and pelvic pain during pregnancy will get better once the baby is born. However, that is not the case for at least a third of women. If you have low back or pelvic pain during or after pregnancy, education and exercise therapy can help. Your physical therapist can teach you the right exercises and explain how to alter the way you perform some activities to best reduce your pain. Your therapist can also help you decide whether other treatments, such as manual therapy or braces, might be helpful. After a thorough evaluation, your physical therapist will customize a treatment program that will work best for you. Usually, you can do the exercises at home. For more information on the treatment of low back and pelvic pain during and after pregnancy, contact your physical therapist specializing in women's health and musculoskeletal disorders.



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