



CHRONIC PAIN AND WOMEN'S HEALTH NEWSLETTER

PREGNANCY AND BACK PAIN



Pregnancy is a wonderful time for women, full of changes. The promise of new life and planning for a baby carries a lot of excitement. It also carries a lot of stress and causes many body changes that aren't so pleasant. Some women can go through

these changes with little difficulty or pain, but others may have significant problems with back or pelvic pain due to some of the dramatic changes the body goes through. Sometimes this pain can be severely disabling and make daily activities like bathing, walking, and housework difficult to impossible. This can be especially frustrating if you also have other little ones at home to care for.

To make matters worse, the pregnant woman cannot take certain medications for pain or do some typical physical therapy treatments such as electrical stimulation.

During pregnancy the body goes through tremendous changes internally and externally. The most obvious change is the increase in body weight and a progressively growing abdomen. This leads to posture problems as the fetus grows and pulls the woman's belly forward. Many women also develop a tendency to "waddle" when they walk due to the size of the belly and the postural changes.

While the increased baby weight and position can affect back pain, there are also some internal forces at work that may potentially cause problems. There are hormone fluctuations that occur during

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Clemens Physical Therapy PLLC

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WEB ONLY! Journal Entries

- © Fibromyalgia / Chronic Fatigue-"Think Tank" developed for ideas and education
- © Osteoporosis- exercise for strong bones
- © Tai Chi for Arthritis
- © Breast Cancer-Screening Factors
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EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY

Exercise during pregnancy is considered safe and beneficial in most circumstances. It can help reduce back pain, improve posture, improve muscle strength and function, im-

prove energy and mood, and maintain a healthy weight.

It is important to **check with your health care provider first** in case there are

medical reasons to avoid or restrict an exercise program. Once you get the go-ahead, **most pregnant women can benefit from moderate intensity exer-**

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Exercise During Pregnancy continued...

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cise. Walking is a great exercise that is tolerated well. Swimming or water aerobics is also good because the buoyancy of the water supports the weight of your belly and can help with some of the swelling typically experienced by some. These activities are especially good if you have not been active prior to pregnancy.

More strenuous activities such as running, strength training, or cycling may be ok if you have done them for a while before pregnancy. Check with your health care practitioner to see if these are safe for you.

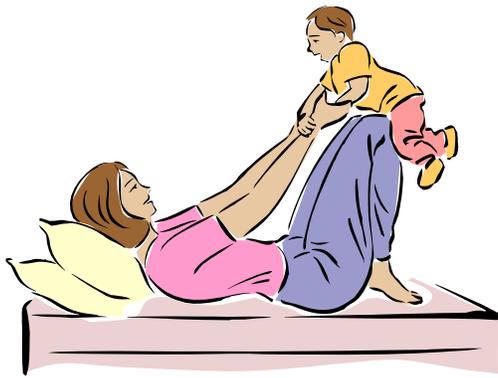
Other types of exercises should be avoided during pregnancy as they place the mom and the fetus in potentially dangerous situations. These include snow or water skiing, contact sports such as hockey, soccer, or basketball, and gymnastics, horseback riding, and scuba diving. Choose a safer option during the duration of your pregnancy.

Always begin your activity with a warm up and end with a cool down and stretch for 5-10 minutes each. Increase your activity slowly if you are not accustomed to exercise. Start with 5-10 minutes and add 5 minutes each week. Aim for getting 30 minutes of exercise most days of the

week.

Other things you should consider for safety in exercising include staying cool, wearing loose and comfortable clothing, and drinking ample water. You should also eat around 300 extra calories a day to keep your energy up while exercising.

Also, taking your heart rate is not a good indicator of exercise effort during pregnancy. Base your workout on



how you feel. Aim for a moderate level at which you can carry on a conversation. Adjust your activity based on your energy level.

Special focus should be given to exercising the pelvic floor with Kegel exercises to prevent leakage of urine during and after pregnancy. Incontinence may commonly occur during and after pregnancy but it is **not**

something you have to deal with. A Physical Therapist who works with women's health can help teach you the correct way to keep this important muscle in shape to stay dry.

There are some instances in which you should **NOT** exercise. These include experiencing chest pain, bleeding, dizziness, uterine contractions, muscle weakness, decreased fetal movement, difficult breathing before exercise, headache, or any medical reason that prevents activity. **If you experience any of these warning signs, stop exercising and call your doctor.**

Exercise is important for you and baby. Find creative ways to add exercise into your day such as finding a friend to walk with, taking several breaks during the day for mini-walks, and walk-and-shop in your local mall. Whatever you do, start early and keep moving!

For more information on recommendations/guidelines for exercise during pregnancy:

- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists: www.acog.org
- The American College of Sports Medicine: www.ascm.org
- United States Department of Health and Human Services: www.health.gov/paguidelines

Research: Exercise Good for Mom and Baby

Aerobic exercise has been shown to improve physical fitness during pregnancy. Kramer and Mc Donald report in the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* that aerobic exercise at least two to three times a week can maintain or improve physical fitness of the mother during pregnancy. Another study by Larsson and Lindqvist in *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica* concluded that the core temperature of the woman did not increase significantly dur-

ing or after exercise during pregnancy and that exercise at 70% maximum heart rate appears to be safe.

But what about benefits to the baby? A study by Snapp and Donaldson in *Biological Research for Nursing* found positive effects from moderate level exercise on gestational diabetes during pregnancy. They conclude that the findings suggest that exercise may reduce the risk of a too large baby.

Another recent pilot project by Million

and May at Kansas City University of Medicine and Biosciences presented at the Annual Meeting of The American Physiological Society in April 2009 found potential benefit to baby. The researchers monitored fetal heart rate during maternal exercise and concluded that exercise may benefit the development of the nervous system of the fetus.

Exercise benefits both mom and baby- More reasons to get out and get moving!

Pregnancy and Back Pain continued...

(continued from page 1)

and after pregnancy to allow for the body to adapt to the growing fetus and allow for delivery. These hormones cause an increase in joint mobility. While a woman can have difficulty just due to these changes, previous back pain or a tendency to be very flexible increases the likelihood of problems.

The changes to posture and stretching of muscles also can lead to problems. The abdominal muscles get stretched a lot with the growth of the baby. There is also a lot of pressure on the muscles of the pelvic floor. These are sling-like muscles at the bottom of the pelvis that support the baby and internal organs. They must work properly to prevent urine leaking, especially with coughing, laughing, or sneezing.

The most common areas of pain during pregnancy are low back and sacroiliac/pubis. Other common problems pre and post pregnancy include rib/thoracic pain, carpal tunnel or thoracic outlet syndrome (wrist/shoulder pain with finger numbness/tingling),

So what's a mommy-to-be suf-

fering from pain to do? Physical therapists are skilled in treatment of back pain and other musculoskeletal problems. A physical therapist that specializes in the area of women's health is able to address the unique needs of all women, including issues that arise during or after pregnancy.

Women's Health Physical Therapists commonly see pregnant women with the following:

- **Back pain**
- **Pubic pain**
- **Sacral pain**
- **Neck pain**
- **Headaches**
- **Hip pain**
- **Rib Pain**
- **Carpel Tunnel**
- **Incontinence (loss of bladder control)**
- **Thoracic Outlet (shoulder/arm/hand tingling and pain)**
- **For Education on Posture and Functional Activities Such as Lifting**

It is important to see your physician, ob-gyn, or midwife to initially evaluate your problem and rule out problems not related to the muscles or joints. Your therapist can combine education, manual (hands-on) therapy, and exercises specifically designed to help you decrease pain and improve your function. You may need to modify some daily activities such as lifting and sleeping positions. Posture can be improved and suggestions for supports during and after pregnancy can be used.

It is also very important to work on the pelvic floor and abdominal muscles for support and function. These areas are commonly weak in people in general who suffer from back pain. Pregnancy adds additional stress to these areas making it more important to pay attention to maintaining normal muscle function.

With a little help and working on specific areas, pain during and after pregnancy can be addressed.

Clemens Physical Therapy PLLC Welcomes A New PT!

We are excited to introduce you to our new Physical Therapist, **Jennifer Key, MPT**.

Jenn is a "local girl" who received her Masters degree in PT from West Virginia and currently lives in Salem with her husband and daughter. She also holds a degree in Public and Community Health from Salem International University and a PTA degree from Fairmont State College. She has

worked with the orthopedic and geriatric population addressing balance and musculoskeletal function and pain issues.

She enjoys working with all women's health and chronic pain issues but has a special place in her heart for problems during and after pregnancy due to being a mom of an adorable one-year-old.

She will be spearheading the treatment and design of programs for pregnancy,

breast cancer, cancer in general, osteoporosis, scoliosis, and balance. Keep an eye out for her upcoming exercise and informational classes for pregnancy!

Jenn has a great personality that fits well with our patient-centered approach. We look forward to the addition of her passion and talent to be able to offer more services to our patients.



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Helping People Who Hurt



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Dr. Clemens is a physical therapist who specializes in the treatment of women's health and chronic pain in men and women.

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PREGNANCY CLASSES STARTING SOON!

Keep an eye out on our website for frequently updated new information and upcoming classes.

Email us at marnie@clemenspt.com or go online and click **CONTACT US** and send a message that you wish to be notified of upcoming events.

- Fibromyalgia
- Chronic Neck and Back Pain
- Headaches
- Bladder Control
- Pelvic Pain
- Pregnancy/Postpartum
- TMJ (Jaw Pain)
- Osteoporosis
- Breast Cancer/ Cancer
- Biofeedback
- Tai Chi, Pilates, Yoga
- Manual "Hands On" Therapy

The content of this newsletter is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to diagnose or suggest treatment for individuals. Please see your health care provider regarding your specific needs.