

PATIENT INFORMATION

Pelvic Girdle Pain in pregnancy

Physiotherapy advice

What is Pelvic Girdle Pain?

This is the name we give to pain you might experience when pregnant within the region from your lower back to your thighs. This pain can be felt at the front, sides or back of the body. You may previously see it called Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction (SPD), which is the pubic (front) region of your pelvis.

Your symptoms can vary from mild – severe and can start at any point during your pregnancy, labour and in some cases after birth.

Tips to help you to manage your Pelvic Girdle pain

1. Movement

- ✓ Gentle movement will help to reduce your symptoms. We understand that when you are in pain the last thing you want to do is move, however, find your baseline (what you are able to do / what is manageable for you) and then slowly progress this from here.
- ✓ Try “movement snacking”. By this we mean doing 10-minute chunks of movement / exercise at a time, with aiming for a total of 150 minutes per day, of moderate exercises, where you are still able to hold a conversation but that you have raised your heart and breathing rate.

2. Pace yourself

- ✓ Make sure you allow some rest breaks to avoid getting to the point where you are very uncomfortable or to the point where your symptoms have flared up.

3. Use a variety of movements and postures.

- ✓ There is no ideal posture or best practice. Your best posture is your next posture. The key thing is that your body needs a variety of different movements and postures
- ✓ Try and notice how long you are comfortable for in one position before you start to fidget and get uncomfortable / start fidgeting
- ✓ If you notice a certain movement or posture is particularly aggravating your symptoms try tweaking / changing this movement to make it more comfortable

4. Mindfulness, meditation and deep breathing

- ✓ Taking a little bit of time out of your day to concentrate on your breath can help to reduce your stress levels, which in turn will help to reduce your pain levels
- ✓ You may not realise you are holding tension in your muscles but you may be surprised how much more relaxed you feel after a short period of mindful breathing
- ✓ First – sit or lay in a comfortable position, relax your shoulders and belly, and rest one hand on your belly and the other on your chest
- ✓ Second – breathe in slowly through your nose (you should feel your belly moving outwards and your chest should stay relatively still)
- ✓ Third – slowly let the breath out either through your mouth or nose. Repeat this cycle for a minute or two until you feel more comfortable and relaxed

5. Ensure you are getting plenty of sleep

- ✓ Try and create a calming bedtime routine, you may find doing the mindful deep breathing above will help to relax you
- ✓ Try not to eat a big meal, use electronic screens or work at least one hour before bedtime
- ✓ Try and stick to a regular bedtime and wake up time as our bodies like a routine
- ✓ Regular movement during the day will help to improve your sleep quality
- ✓ When pregnant you will feel tired and needing extra top up naps during the day. Try and keep these short (20-30 minutes is the optimum) and in the morning
- ✓ When you are up during the night, try and keep the lights dim and try to refrain from checking in on electronic devices
- ✓ Use pillows for comfort, the position and number of pillows you will prefer might change during your pregnancy as your baby grows and changes position
- ✓ Consider having a note pad beside your bed to write down any thoughts on your mind or how your feeling

6. Thoughts, feeling and beliefs

- ✓ Having a baby is a lot of change not only to your physical self but also your mental self. Make sure to talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling, this may be a health professional, family member, or your partner – this can help to lighten mental load you are feeling
- ✓ Ask for help or support from health professionals

- ✓ Consider writing a journal about how you are feeling, your thoughts and feelings
- ✓ Unfollow anyone or pages on social media that do not make you feel good

How to make these tips into new habits and routines

This is when it can become more challenging. We have all been there when we decide to start something new or to change our habits and routine for the better, the tricky bit is sticking at it.

The key thing is to make your goals SMART. By this we mean specific to you, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely. For example, your goal might be to end your day with 5 minutes of deep breathing, mediation, and gentle stretching to help improve your sleep quality and comfort.

Make sure you celebrate / reward yourself for doing / completing a new habit, initially you may need reminders / post it notes to help you. Do not berate yourself for not completing one of your new habits, focus on the next on

Exercises which may help you

- 1) **Pelvic Tilt** – make sure you are in a comfortable sitting position. First tilt your pelvis backwards, by tucking your tail bone underneath you and flatten the small of your back and then tilt your pelvis forwards so that you're sitting up on your sitting bones, slowly repeat this. If you want to incorporate your breath, breath out on the tilt backwards and then breath in again as you sit back up again. This can also be done on a birthing ball. Repeat 5 – 10 times



- 2) **Transverse Abdominus Muscles** – start in a neutral supported sitting position, take a nice deep breath in and then slowly breath out, as you breath out slowly draw your low tummy (below your belly button) muscles in towards you (imagine you are hugging your baby up with your tummy muscles), then as you breath in again allow your tummy muscles to relax. This exercise can also be done in standing or on all fours (in a crawling position). Aim to hold this for 5-10 seconds, repeating 10 times



- 3) **Standing up and then sitting back down** – Sit towards the edge of the chair / seat, with your feet underneath your knees. Take a breath in and then as you breath out, lean forwards squeeze your buttocks to bring your hips forwards and push yourself up into standing ensuring your knees are going over your second to third toe, repeat 5 – 10 times.



- 4) **Cat – Cow Stretch** – Start on all fours with your knees under your hips and your hands under your shoulders. Roll your pelvis forwards and lift your head to look up and then slowly roll your pelvis forward and bringing your head back down again to flatten off your back, repeat 5 – 10 times



- 5) **Threading the needle** – Start on all fours with your knees under hips and your hands under your shoulders. Take your right hand off the mat and then keeping your palm facing up towards the ceiling reach through to the opposite side of the body and then bring your arm and reach up towards the ceiling. Ensure you keep your hips still throughout and follow your arm movement with your head to encourage some gentle movement in your spine. Repeat 5 – 10 times, and then repeat on the opposite side



- 6) **Early Superman (cat clawing)** – Start on all fours with your knees under your hips and your hands under your shoulders. Slowly pick up one hand off the floor / mat and then slowly put it back again on the mat. Try and focus on just moving your arms and keeping the rest of your body still, repeat 5 – 10 times on each side.



Progression – staying on all fours, this time always keeping both hands in contact with the mat, lift one leg off the mat and extend the leg behind you, again trying to focus and control the rest of your body with keeping it still. Imagine you have a tray of drinks on your back, and you are trying to not let them spill over. Repeat 5 – 10 times per side



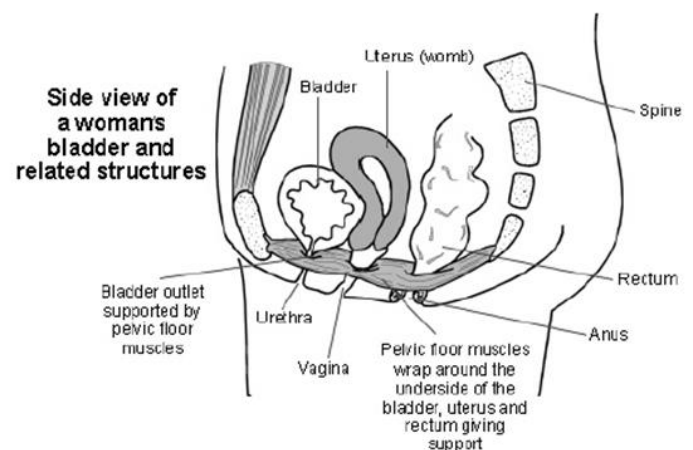
- 7) **Full Superman** – Start on all fours, with your knees under your hips and your hands under your shoulders. Slowly extend your opposite arm and opposite leg, while focusing and controlling the rest of your body to limit any movement. Repeat 5 – 10 times per side.



- 8) **Breathing** – sit in a comfortable position, wrap a scarf loosely around your rib cage, so you can feel where to breathe in to, as you breathe in you should feel your ribs expand out to the side into the scarf, repeat as many times as comfort allows.



- 9) **Pelvic floor muscle exercises** – Sit down on a firm but comfortable seat. Imagine trying to close your back passage as if you were trying to hold in wind. At the same time try and imagine stopping yourself from passing urine. This involves tightening and lifting the muscles around your back passage, vagina and front passage. You should feel a sensation of “squeeze and lift”. There are two exercises you need to do to strengthen the pelvic floor muscle.



- i. Exercise one (Endurance) Slowly tighten and lift the pelvic floor muscle and hold for as many seconds as comfort allows (your goal is to aim for 10 seconds, we do not expect you do this initially) repeat this endurance hold up to 10 times
- ii. Exercise two (Fast) Tighten and relax the pelvic floor muscle as quickly as you can (holding for approximately 1 second). Make sure you relax completely in-between each squeeze (your goal is to aim to repeat this up to 10 times)

Alongside working on your pelvic floor muscle strength, it is also important to spend a short period every day concentrating on your breathing and relaxing your pelvic floor muscle.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.