

# Back pain

Almost everyone has some back pain in pregnancy. Sometimes back pain is worse than other times. The good news is it usually goes away after delivery. In the mean time here are some things to do.

-Heat- Can help relax sore muscles, this can be done with rice packs, heating pads, tubs or showers.

-Massage- you, your partner or a professional can help massage some of the pain.

-Maternity belts- Following is some information on maternity belts. It is helpful to reposition the baby.

-Physical Therapy- we have a great physical therapist for back pain at Adventist Health Tillamook. If your back pain is really bad, do some physical therapy.

-It is OK to use bengay/ icy-hot/lotion to help sore muscles.

-Stretching/Yoga is very helpful. Following is some links for stretching in pregnancy and also some stretching.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sja4az8Invc>



## Exercises for a Healthy Back



### Diagonal Curl

This exercise strengthens the muscles of the back, hips, and abdomen. If your pregnant patient has not already been exercising regularly, she should skip this exercise.

1. Sit on the floor with knees bent, feet on the floor, and hands clasped in front of you.
2. Twist your upper torso to the right until your hands touch the floor. Do the same movement to the left. Repeat on both sides 5 times.



### Forward Bend

This exercise stretches and strengthens the muscles of the back.

1. Sit in a chair in a comfortable position. Keep your arms relaxed.
2. Bend forward slowly, with your arms in front and hanging down. Stop bending if you feel any discomfort on your abdomen.
3. Hold for 5 seconds, then sit up slowly without arching your back. Repeat 5 times.



### Back Press

This exercise strengthens the muscles of the back, torso, and upper body and promotes good posture.

1. Stand with your back against a wall with your feet 10–12 inches away from it.
2. Press the lower part of your back against the wall.
3. Hold for 10 seconds, then release. Repeat 10 times.



### Backward Stretch

This exercise stretches and strengthens the muscles of the back, pelvis, and thighs.

1. Kneel on hands and knees, with your knees 8–10 inches apart and your arms straight (hands under your shoulders).
2. Curl backward slowly, tucking your head toward your knees and keeping your arms extended.
3. Hold for 5 seconds, then return to all fours slowly. Repeat 5 times.

## Exercises for a Healthy Back (continued)



### Rocking Back Arch

This exercise stretches and strengthens the muscles of the back, hips, and abdomen.

1. Kneel on hands and knees, with your weight distributed evenly and your back straight.
2. Rock back and forth for a count of 5.
3. Return to the original position and curl your back up as far as you can. Repeat 5–10 times.



### Trunk Twist

This exercise stretches the muscles of the back, spine, and upper torso.

1. Sit on the floor with your legs crossed.
2. Hold your left foot with your left hand using your right hand for support.
3. Slowly twist your upper torso to the right.
4. Switch hands and repeat on the left. Repeat on both sides 5–10 times.



#### Leg Lift Crawl

This exercise strengthens the muscles of the back and abdomen. Kneel on hands and knees, with your weight distributed evenly and your arms straight (hands under your shoulders).

1. Lift your left knee and bring it toward your elbow.
2. Straighten your leg back. Do not swing your leg back or arch your back. Repeat on both sides 5–10 times.

#### Upper Body Bends

This exercise strengthens the muscles of the back and torso.

1. Stand with legs apart, knees bent slightly, with hands on hips.
2. Bend forward slowly, keeping your upper back straight, until you feel the muscle stretch along your upper thigh. Repeat 10 times.



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Source: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. *Easing Back Pain During Pregnancy*. ACOG Patient Education Pamphlet AP115. Washington, DC: ACOG;2009

Following is more information from Mayo Clinic.



## Pregnancy week by week

**Back pain during pregnancy isn't surprising, but it still deserves attention. Consider seven ways to relieve back pain during pregnancy — from good posture and physical activity to complementary therapies.**

By Mayo Clinic Staff

Back pain during pregnancy is a common complaint — and it's no wonder. You're gaining weight, your center of gravity changes, and your hormones are relaxing the ligaments in the joints of your pelvis. Often, however, you can prevent or ease back pain during pregnancy. Consider seven ways to give pregnancy back pain the boot.

As your baby grows, your center of gravity shifts forward. To avoid falling forward, you might compensate by leaning back — which can strain the muscles in your lower back and contribute to back pain during pregnancy. Keep these principles of good posture in mind:

- Stand up straight and tall.
- Hold your chest high.
- Keep your shoulders back and relaxed.
- Don't lock your knees.

When you stand, use a comfortably wide stance for the best support. If you must stand for long periods of time, rest one foot on a low step stool — and take time for frequent breaks.

Good posture also means sitting with care. Choose a chair that supports your back, or place a small pillow behind your lower back.

Wear low-heeled — not flat — shoes with good arch support. Avoid high heels, which can further shift your balance forward and cause you to fall.

You might also consider wearing a maternity support belt. Although research on the effectiveness of maternity support belts is limited, some women find the additional support helpful.

When lifting a small object, squat down and lift with your legs. Don't bend at the waist or lift with your back. It's also important to know your limits. Ask for help if you need it.

Sleep on your side, not your back. Keep one or both knees bent. Consider using pregnancy or support pillows between your bent knees, under your abdomen and behind your back.

While evidence to support their effectiveness is limited, massage or the application of a heating pad or ice pack to your back might help.

Regular physical activity can keep your back strong and might relieve back pain during pregnancy. With your health care provider's OK, try gentle activities — such as walking or water exercise. A physical therapist also can show you stretches and exercises that might help.

You might also stretch your lower back. Rest on your hands and knees with your head in line with your back. Pull in your stomach, rounding your back slightly. Hold for several seconds, then relax your stomach and back — keeping your back as flat as possible. Gradually work up to 10 repetitions. Ask your health care provider about other stretching exercises, too.

Some research suggests that acupuncture might relieve back pain during pregnancy. Chiropractic treatment might provide comfort for some women as well. However, further research is needed. If you're considering a complementary therapy, discuss it with your health care provider. Be sure to tell the chiropractor or acupuncturist that you are pregnant.

If you have severe back pain during pregnancy or back pain that lasts more than two weeks, talk to your health care provider. He or she might recommend medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) or other treatments.

Keep in mind that back pain during pregnancy might be a sign of preterm labor or a urinary tract infection. If you have back pain during pregnancy that's accompanied by vaginal bleeding, fever or burning during urination, contact your health care provider right away.