

## Implications for Labour

It is important that you inform your midwife that you have had Pelvic Girdle Pain when you go into labour. The main thing to remember is avoid labouring in positions that may aggravate your symptoms. Lying on your back with your legs in the air is the worst position, especially with other people holding your legs.

A good way to start may be on hands and knees. You could then progress to leaning forward on a beanbag or birthing ball.

If you get tired, you could lie on your side, or you could sit upright and lean back onto a beanbag or onto your support person.

The main thing to remember is **KEEP YOUR LEGS SUPPORTED.**

## After the baby is born...

Research shows that the hormones that contribute to your pelvic pain disappear from your system quite quickly following delivery, however pelvic symptoms can take some time to resolve.

Often your pelvis will feel much better immediately after delivery, due to the decreased load on your pelvis, however the symptoms may re-emerge a few days later. So it is important to be

cautious with movement for about 3 months post delivery.

If you have been fitted with a pelvic support belt, take it with you to the hospital.

In the first six weeks, the most important thing is to try and spend at least 1 hour lying down during the day.

## Will it go away?

The majority of women make a full recovery after giving birth, however you may notice that:

- over-activity causes your symptoms to re- emerge
- your symptoms occur pre-menstrually
- your symptoms improve when you cease breastfeeding

Pelvic Girdle pain tends to recur with subsequent pregnancies and may be worse if pregnancies occur close together. **BUT IT CAN BE TREATED, AND THE EARLIER THE BETTER.**

***If you have any questions about Pregnancy-related Pelvic Girdle Pain during and after pregnancy, please speak to your physiotherapist.***

# PREGNANCY RELATED PELVIC GIRDLE PAIN



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## What is Pregnancy-related Pelvic Girdle Pain (PGP)?

During pregnancy, a hormone called Relaxin is released. It acts to soften the ligaments that hold your joints together. It acts more specifically on the joints of your pelvis – the pubic symphysis and the sacro-iliac joints.

Increased mobility at these joints allows your baby's head to pass through your pelvis during delivery. However, for some women, this can cause some discomfort and difficulty with movement.

Pelvic Girdle Pain can develop at any time during pregnancy, and is said to affect more than 50% of women. Sometimes, symptoms do not develop until after the baby is born.

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms can vary from woman to woman, but may include

- Buttock pain on one or both sides
- Pain at the pubic symphysis (the bones at the front of your pelvis)
- Low back pain
- Pain in the legs
- Clicking or 'locking' in the pelvis

## How is Pelvic Girdle Pain managed?

If you have symptoms of Pelvic Girdle Pain, it is important to be assessed as soon as possible. Recognising and managing the problem early will limit

your discomfort and may assist with your recovery after delivery.

Commonly, pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain may be ignored, and seen as 'just part of pregnancy'. But it can be effectively treated and managed with physiotherapy.

The following management techniques are useful -

- **REST** – having a lie down in the afternoon takes the weight of your body and the baby off your pelvis
- **ACTIVITY MODIFICATION** – the two main things to remember are 1) keep your knees together, and 2) keep your weight even on both legs
- **PELVIC SUPPORT** – your physiotherapist may fit you with a pelvic support belt (as shown)



- **EXERCISE** – it is important to maintain strength around the pelvic region. Your physiotherapist will prescribe specific exercises for you.

## What helps?

- 1) Lying down – this takes the weight of your growing baby off your pelvis. Try to do this every afternoon for at least an hour.
- 2) Avoiding wide-leg positions and standing on one leg – takes care when putting on socks and pants, and getting in and out of the car.
- 3) Sleeping on your side with a pillow between your legs – this helps to align your pelvis.
- 4) Wearing low-heeled shoes
- 5) Driving an automatic car rather than a manual, where possible
- 6) Using heat – a hot water bottle or a heat pack over the buttock or low back area will help to relax the muscles and may give some relief
- 7) Massage – gentle soft tissue massage can help to relax muscles and ease discomfort. Your physiotherapist will show you how
- 8) Exercise – pelvic floor, abdominal and buttock exercises are all important to support your pelvis and back

## What doesn't help?

- 1) Standing on one leg
- 2) Wide leg positions
- 3) Frequent use of steps and stairs
- 4) Prolonged standing and walking
- 5) Lifting and carrying heavy objects
- 6) Excessive weight gain