

## Overcoming Back Pain in Pregnancy & Childbirth With MamaTens



Could lower back pain be a cause for concern during your pregnancy? According to recent reports, around 80% of pregnant women can expect some degree of lower back pain during their pregnancy with around 50% experiencing severe pain and discomfort.

Back pain can be anything from a few nagging twinges, in the early stages, to quite painful and bothersome aches as the pregnancy advances and your baby continues to grow. So how do you prepare for the inevitable and what is the best way to safely control and alleviate lower back pain without affecting your unborn child?

Learn how you can easily manage and minimize your back pain so that it doesn't interfere with other aspects of your daily life.

### Where can you expect to experience back pain?

There are several reasons why back pain occurs during pregnancy and back pain might be experienced in different areas of the back. In some cases, the pain can be felt in the upper back. Upper back pain during pregnancy is not unusual, however, lower back pain during early pregnancy is much more common because the lower back stretches during pregnancy and continues to stretch throughout the development period. In some cases, pain can also be felt in the hips and sometimes in the neck.

Quite simply, every pregnancy and the back pain it brings can be a different experience for different women. No two women are exactly the same in stature, and their babies may grow at different rates but that's not all that should be considered when evaluating the different degrees of back pain.

### When does back pain occur during pregnancy?

During the first 4-5 weeks of pregnancy, there's not much change to the body although some women say they feel a little "different". This feeling is simply known as "pregnancy symptoms" and can include the feeling that your period is about to arrive. This feeling is further enhanced with sensitive breast symptoms and perhaps a little spotting. Around 8-11 weeks, the body is beginning to prepare for the big occasion and that's when you may notice some physical changes and feel some twinges to your lower back area.

Over the coming 4-6 weeks, lower back pain may become much more noticeable but at this stage, it can still be nothing more than an inconvenience. However, the body

is undergoing further changes, which at this time can begin to affect your posture.

### **What are the main causes of back pain in pregnancy?**

During a full-term pregnancy, a typical healthy woman can expect to gain around 30 pounds in weight. This figure could be as much as 40 pounds or more if twins or triplets are expected. It's not hard then to imagine how all that extra weight is going to affect your spine and ultimately cause pain in the lower region of your back. Also, the additional weight will inevitably affect the pelvis, which will, in turn, affect the way you position your body. By changing your posture in order to manage the extra weight, you will place more strain on your lower spine. Hormone changes, which affect the pelvic ligaments allowing them to loosen and relax, can also put more strain on the spine.

As the uterus expands, your rectal abdominis muscles will begin to separate in preparation for child birth. This too, places additional pressure on the spine, increasing pain in the lower and possibly the upper areas of the back. It's very easy to become stressed during this time but this only exacerbates the problem because stress will cause muscle tension, which can lead to back spasms. Some degree of back pain during pregnancy is unavoidable but that doesn't mean you cannot prepare and simply manage your back pain effectively.

### **Effectively controlling or avoiding back pain in pregnancy**

There are a number of actions and preparations you can make during the early stages of your pregnancy, which will put you in complete control of your anticipated back pain and allow you to manage your pain without too much stress. First and foremost, always stay hydrated during your pregnancy.

- Some lifestyle changes and the awareness of what to do to avoid back pain are very useful to know before matters get worse. These include bending your knees and keeping your back straight when lifting or bending and don't lift anything that's too heavy.
- It's always best to wear flat shoes or shoes with a very low heel during pregnancy so that your body weight is evenly distributed. Don't twist your body around without moving your feet first as this can cause twisting pressure on your spine.
- If you are carrying shopping then try to divide the weight between two carrier bags rather than carry everything in one hand. This reduces side strain and pressure on the hips and spine.
- Try sitting upright at home when watching TV or at work. Use cushions or a pregnancy pillow for back support and hold your shoulders back. Be aware that keeping your back straight will cause much less stress on your spine and help to alleviate any pain or even help you to avoid back pain later.
- Regular back massages followed by a warm bath can help relax the muscles, relieve stress and tension and reduce any existing back pain. Also, a firm mattress is

essential in avoiding back pain together with sleeping on your side with your knees bent.

Practicing the above recommendations will help in reducing and possibly avoiding the worst symptoms of back pain but if the pain has reached a point where it's becoming unbearable then you may need to take further action.

### **Managing and reducing existing back pain**

Helping yourself to reduce pain involves some action on your part and there's none better than physical exercise. Of course, this needs to be measured and gentle due to your condition but it will help you to stay mobile and flexible. Start by working on exercises to help strengthen your tummy muscles. There are several pregnancy workouts that you can try including yoga, pilates, walking, swimming and push-ups. Ideally, you should aim to carry out at least 20 minutes of exercise every day with a view to strengthening your core and pelvic muscles. There are many pregnancy workout recommendations available online, designed for each stage of your pregnancy. For example first trimester, second trimester, third trimester etc.

You should only carry out regular exercise if it is not too uncomfortable but bear in mind that the more frequently you do exercises, the less pain you will tend to feel as each muscle is worked to its full potential. Exercise also helps to release endorphins, which are natural pain relievers, and which will make you feel so much better. There are many ante-natal classes available, which encourage regular, gentle exercise so joining a group near you would be a good move.

### **What to do in extreme cases of back pain due to pregnancy**

If you have been following all the recommendations and medical advice about avoiding and managing back pain during your pregnancy but nothing is working for you then it may be time to consider other options. Pregnancy should be a happy time for any woman but if it's a totally drawn-out and painful experience then it could be remembered for all the wrong reasons. In cases where back pain due to pregnancy is becoming the bane of your life, there's no need to suffer in silence as there are many other options to consider in controlling back pain.

#### **• Consult your doctor**

If pain is really unbearable then in the first instance talk to your GP. Your doctor will advise you accordingly about your options and may recommend a specialist for therapy treatment. He may also suggest you take paracetamol in low dosage. (*\* It is not recommended you take any medications during pregnancy, so always consult your medical practitioner first*). Alternatively, you might want to talk to your midwife about your back pain problem as they are likely to have had much more experience with these types of issues.

#### **• Hot and cold therapy**

Applying heat and cold to the affected area can help reduce inflammation. The best way to carry out this procedure is to place a hot water bottle or a heating pad on the area of back pain and leave it in place for just 3 minutes. Then remove and replace it

with an ice pack for one minute. Repeat this exercise for up to 30 minutes at a time. If this doesn't work for you then dispense with the ice pack and just apply heat to the pain area. Avoid putting anything hot on your stomach.

- **Breathing exercises**

Whilst it might not at first seem relevant, shallow or labored breathing can affect your back pain. That's because many of your internal organs are squashed upwards towards the diaphragm and so the rib cage doesn't lift as it would normally during breathing. This can result in back pain so to avoid this, practice deep breathing whenever you can and be aware that the depth of your breathing can have a direct effect on your well-being during pregnancy.

- **Aromatherapy and natural herbal remedies**

Amongst the many natural remedies for back pain during pregnancy, is simply relaxing in a warm bath with a few drops of essential oil, which has been proven to ease muscle pain. Lavender oil is especially good for this from the second semester onwards and so is camomile, peppermint, eucalyptus, bergamot, geranium, spearmint and ylang ylang. There are some herbal remedies that are not recommended for use during pregnancy and these include lady's mantle, jasmine and chamaelirium. If in doubt consult a professional aromatherapist or an alternative medicine practitioner.

- **Acupuncture for back pain in pregnancy**

Despite the very thought of sharp needles being pushed into the upper layer of your body tissue, acupuncture is a well-known ancient Asian treatment for back pain in pregnancy. There is a direct correlation between acupuncture and back pain but ensure that the treatment is being administered by a professional practitioner. Results from acupuncture treatment can in some cases be immediate.

- **Consult a registered chiropractor**

A chiropractor is trained in various techniques used to relieve back pain and can usually provide special remedies for treating back pain during pregnancy. It is advisable to find a chiropractor who specializes in treating pregnant women with back pain as they are more likely to have developed their own special technique just for this purpose. Treatment involves the manipulation of joints and soft tissue.

- **Physiotherapy and posture training**

A qualified physiotherapist can provide you with a range of manipulating joint and nerve treatments but they will very often leave you with a list of follow-on exercises to continue with at home. This usually involves some specific training on how to sit correctly, how to bend and walk and how to lie down and get up without causing any strain to your back. It is once again, all about posture and improving your core and pelvic muscles.

- **Meditation and yoga**

Many women who have experienced pregnancy will swear by these techniques and there's absolutely no reason to doubt them. Relaxation has very positive benefits for pregnant women and back pain can simply be "washed away" during deep sessions of meditation. Pain is, after all, said to be in the mind so if the mind can control the level of pain then this technique may well work for some women.

- **Wear the right clothing**

Seems like an obvious suggestion but wearing loose fitting and comfortable clothing will make you feel less restricted in your movement. Flat shoes too will help but a really useful addition to your pregnancy attire is a maternity belt, bump support belt or belly band as they are often known. A maternity belt is designed to simply hold up your bump and offers some support for your pelvis by releasing the strain on your lower back. It is suggested you use a maternity belt as a complimentary aid in conjunction with other options.

- **Massaging devices**

There can be no doubt that a back massage carried out by a professional masseuse or masseur will have some profound benefits. However, in the absence of a professional, you might be tempted to try a massage chair or other similar device. Any form of muscle manipulation that is both pleasurable and relieving has to be a good thing so if you find a device that works for you then there should be no problem. It is not recommended, however, to use any massaging device on your belly during pregnancy.

- **Pain relief creams, sprays and gels**

There are several pain relief creams and gels available for back pain during pregnancy, which include deep freeze cold relief gel and heat relief cream. BioFreeze, Tiger Balm and Bengay are all advertised as being safe, however, anything that might contain aspirin should be avoided. Ibuprofen is also not recommended by some health professionals. With so much uncertainty about the use of various creams, sprays and gels, we suggest you consult your healthcare professional before using any remedies, which could be absorbed into the skin and ultimately affect your unborn baby.

- **MamaTens device**

There's absolutely no reason why exercise, alternative therapy, meditation and any number of other complimentary therapies shouldn't help you to enjoy your pregnancy over the full term. Back pain during pregnancy affects around 80% of women so you might be one of the lucky ones who experience no pain symptoms whatsoever. For everyone else who is reaching their full term, there is another alternative treatment that has been proven to relieve back pain and labour pains quickly, easily and safely. The **MamaTens** device (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation), has gained a reputation for being highly effective against back pain for pregnant women from all over the world.

Midwives and healthcare professionals also recommend **MamaTens** because they have seen the results themselves, first hand. This device is designed for use during the latter stages of pregnancy and into the early stages of labor from initial contractions to actual childbirth. It's at this time when pain is most intense and if you have taken every step during your pregnancy to avoid drugs and anything else that could endanger your unborn child then the **MamaTens** device is an obvious option. It can be used in conjunction with or as an alternative to an epidural or Entonox (gas and air) during the long and painful hours of your labour.

The device, which is simply attached to the body via electrode pads and worn so that you can remain upright and mobile whilst in labor, works on increasing and stimulating your body's endorphins, providing natural pain relief. It's very easy to use and you are in complete control of the unit and pain relief levels at all times. There are three preset programs and an additional boost feature to help you through the most painful of contractions. It also offers very effective relief from afterbirth pains too. Now you can look forward to childbirth without the fear of excruciating pain because you can now have the means to control pain at the touch of a button.