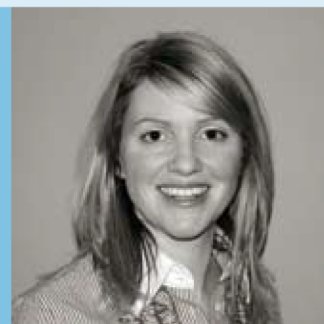


Q&A Ask the Physio



Elbow pain

Q I've started to notice pain in both elbows when I'm lifting my four-month-old baby out of his cot. What could this be and how can I relieve it?

A The posture commonly adopted by new mums when breastfeeding results in the lengthening and weakening of the muscles that support the shoulder blades. This leads to compensation when lifting where the arms have to bear the brunt of the baby's weight, which can lead to elbow pain. The pain can be easily resolved by drawing the shoulder blades together every time you lift your baby.

Sore ribs

Q I am 35 weeks pregnant and my ribs on the right side feel very sore when I am sitting for a while. This pain began during week 22 and hasn't seemed to let up. What can I do?

A The ribcage has to greatly expand as your pregnancy progresses to make room for your growing uterus and to maintain your lung capacity. This expansion pressure on the ribs can manifest as pain and is further compounded by the baby kicks into the already aching area. Try these tips to help rib pain:

- Practice deep breathing exercises while sitting comfortably – inhale deeply through the nose, hold it for three seconds and exhale out through the mouth. Repeat five times every few hours.
- Give your rib a stretch by getting onto your hands and



knees and rolling your hips towards your right heel and then towards your left heel in a circular motion. Do five circles slowly in each direction. Discontinue if your wrists get sore.

- Alternate your position so you are not sitting for too long. Standing up takes the pressure off the ribs as the uterus is not pressed up against the lungs and ribcage as much.

Balance after birth

Q How long will it take for my balance to return to normal after the birth of my baby?

A In the third trimester and the postnatal months, ligament laxity creates joint instability. It will take approximately six months after the birth for your ligaments to return to their former lengths and your balance to return to pre-pregnancy levels.

During this time it is recommended to avoid all activities that increase the risk of falling. Be particularly vigilant going down steps or a kerb (especially when carrying baba) as these are common

causes of falls for mums-to-be and new mums. You are also more at risk if you have had an ankle sprain or knee ligament injury in the past.

Exercises for balance

Q Can you recommend any exercises to do during pregnancy to improve my balance?

A Yes! It's easy to work on your balance. Stand beside the kitchen counter in your runners. Stand onto your right foot and balance for five to ten seconds. If you are wobbling badly, lightly touch your fingertips on the counter for reassurance. Repeat on your left foot. When you can do this for 30 seconds without holding on, you can try it with your eyes closed. Practice this one every day for quick results!

Knee swelling

Q I squatted down to grab my running toddler and felt a sudden sharp pain in my right knee as I stood back up. It has been sore with some swelling all week since. I am 30 weeks pregnant. What did I do?

A It sounds like you have pinched your knee

cartilage (meniscus). When the knee flexes and rotates, the meniscus moves forward. If you straighten up too quickly, the meniscus may not move back into place quickly enough and can get pinched between the two bones. If it is pinched badly enough, a little piece may actually tear off. This injury needs to be promptly assessed by a chartered physiotherapist to determine the extent of the damage.

Important:

These answers are not a substitute for a proper assessment by a chartered physiotherapist. If you are suffering with any pain or injury, please contact your local chartered physiotherapist. It is vital to deal promptly with these aches and pains as they will only get worse as your baby grows bigger and heavier.

Jenny Branigan is a chartered physiotherapist and partner at Total Physio, an independent private practice in South Dublin. She is also a first-time mum to 19-month-old Jamie.

www.totalphysio.ie

Ask the experts...

If you have a question regarding any aspect of your pregnancy, new baby or toddler please send your questions and we will do our very best to answer it for you. Email us at asktheexpert@ashville.com or write to us at **maternity & infant**, Ashville Media Group, Longboat Quay, 57-59 Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2.