

ASK THE PHYSIOTHERAPIST

Q

Change in foot size

Since having my baby three weeks ago, my feet feel bigger and I cannot fit into my shoes anymore. Is this a permanent change?



Not necessarily. Your feet can change size during pregnancy for two main reasons. The accumulation of fluid, also known as oedema, can be quite dramatic in the feet and noticeable from the second trimester onwards. Larger feet due to fluid retention usually subside by about six weeks postnatally. The second reason is due to the effect of the hormone relaxin, which causes our ligaments to become lax in the third trimester, to facilitate passage of the baby out through the pelvis. However, this hormone also causes the ligaments in the rest of the body to loosen. So your feet have not actually grown in pregnancy; the ligaments are just not holding the bones together as tightly as they used to. Usually this is not permanent – when you lose all the baby weight, you should notice that you fit back into your old shoes from your pre-Mummy days.

Q

Knee injury in pregnancy

I knelt down quickly to stop my running toddler and felt a sharp pain in my knee as I stood back up. It has been sore and swollen all week since. I am 31 weeks pregnant. What could I have done?

It sounds like you have pinched the cartilage in your knee, also known as the meniscus. When the knee bends and rotates, the cartilage moves forward. If you straighten up too quickly, the cartilage 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 your Chartered Physiotherapist to determine how much damage has been done. In the meantime, start icing your knee for 10 minutes at a time, with a cloth between your skin and the ice to prevent an ice burn.



THESE ANSWERS ARE NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR A PROPER ASSESSMENT BY YOUR CHARTERED PHYSIOTHERAPIST. IT IS VITAL TO DEAL PROMPTLY WITH ANY ACES AND PAINS AND THEY WILL ONLY GET WORSE AS YOUR BABY GETS BIGGER AND HEAVIER.

Q

Sciatica while pregnant

I am pregnant with my second baby and am suffering with back pain, and pains shooting into my left leg. Everyone is telling me that I have sciatica and that it will keep getting worse as my bump grows (I am 24 weeks pregnant now). Please help!

You may be suffering from sciatica or indeed pelvic girdle pain (PGP). Contrary to popular belief, you are not more prone to sciatica if you are pregnant. Aches brought on by pregnancy tend to be in the pelvis and back, not around the sciatic nerve. Many women who think they have sciatica during pregnancy actually have pelvic girdle pain. The sciatic

nerve comes from your lower back, travels down the back of your legs and then branches out to your feet. It allows you to feel sensations and move muscles in your legs. Inflammation or pressure from the back can make the sciatic nerve painful, resulting in sciatica. It is very important that you are assessed by your chartered physiotherapist, who is used

to dealing with pregnant women, as soon as possible, to determine if it is a sciatic nerve problem or PGP. You will need prompt treatment to minimise your symptoms as your pregnancy progresses.



QUICK GUIDE

1

**What are ...
THE BEST SHOES
FOR PREGNANCY?**

Choosing the right shoes for pregnancy that are comfortable and roomy and offer adequate support will improve problems with painful feet, posture and back pain. We recommended you wear an arch support to help support the extra weight your feet might be carrying, and pairing them with support stockings that will minimise foot and ankle swelling. Unlike maternity clothes, comfy shoes can be worn long after you have had your baby, so they are a great addition to your wardrobe.

2

**Best ...
STRETCHES FOR
BACK PAIN**

Although back pain during pregnancy can be a sign of more serious conditions, mostly it is the result of changes happening within the body. Stretching can relieve this pain. Try the back stretch: Start on your hands and knees, with your legs wide apart and hands placed forward just a little in front of your head. Sit back on your knees and stretch your arms forward to feel a stretch along the spine. Stretching is a simple way to achieve comfort and relief.

3

**Get to
know ...
BALANCE DURING
PREGNANCY**

You may experience a reduction in your balance as your pregnancy progresses. As your uterus expands, your centre of gravity changes with it. Your bump gets larger and it causes a forward tilting of your pelvis. This increases the curvature of your lower back, which can affect your balance. Weakening abdominal muscles and swelling in your legs and feet may make it worse. To avoid injury, avoid situations where you could fall, wearing high heels and carrying heavy objects.

