

Ask the Physio



Pubic bone pain

Q I am 16 weeks pregnant with my third child and have a pain around my pubic bone that extends down my inner thigh. Walking is painful, and getting out of and rolling over in bed is almost impossible. What is causing this and what can I do about it?

A You appear to be suffering from Pelvic Girdle Pain (PGP) which refers to pain and discomfort of the pelvis associated with pregnancy. PGP is a significant obstetric problem and can begin as early as 12 weeks. To ease your symptoms place a pillow between your legs and one under your bump to support it when sleeping on your side. Keep your knees close together as much as possible and take smaller steps while walking.

Application of an ice pack for ten minutes at a time may help but avoid direct contact with your skin.

You should attend your local chartered physiotherapist, who deals with pregnant women, for assessment and for a specific treatment plan for the rest of your pregnancy.

Uncomfortable sleep

Q I am 32 weeks pregnant and I keep tossing and turning at night and cannot get comfortable. Can you recommend a comfortable sleeping position for me?

A When you are pregnant, sleeping on your side is best. Sleeping on your left side, in particular, is reported to benefit your baby by

improving blood flow to the placenta. It also helps your kidneys efficiently eliminate waste products and fluids from your body, which may reduce swelling in your feet and hands.

When sleeping on your side, try placing one or two pillows between your legs and one under your bump to support it. Avoid sleeping on your back during pregnancy, especially in the later months. This will prevent the weight of your uterus pressing onto your spine, back muscles, internal organs and blood vessels, which could lead to muscle aches and pains, haemorrhoids and impaired circulation.

Neck pain

Q What can I do to get some relief from my neck pain? I am 28 weeks pregnant.

A First of all, don't ignore the pain. Find out what is causing it so you can prevent it getting worse as the pregnancy progresses.

Consider your posture. During pregnancy, your posture will gradually change due to the increasing size of your breasts, which can cause the shoulders to round and the neck to poke forwards. As the uterus grows, this too can lead to postural changes which can aggravate neck pain. These changes put pressure on the bones and muscles of the neck and spine and should be treated as soon as possible.

Make sure you are not using too many pillows in bed. Many pregnant women will use too many pillows under their neck in an effort to find that perfect sleeping position.

Ice or heat can be used to

treat neck pain. Using ice packs on the neck will prevent swelling and reduce pain when you suffer a sudden, sharp bout of neck pain. For more gradual onset aching neck pain, applying heat can help soothe and relax the neck muscles.

Neck movements to maintain the range of motion are important for easing pain and preventing its return later in your pregnancy. Talk to your chartered physiotherapist who can advise you on safe neck exercises to do while pregnant.

Back to fitness

Q I am trying to get fit after the birth of my baby and like to jog. I am not finding it strenuous but the front of my legs feel very sore after a few minutes of activity. What is the cause of this?

A How quickly you begin running postnatally will depend on your previous levels of fitness, how you delivered your baby and how you are feeling after the birth.

Aerobic exercise, like swimming, low impact aerobics, cycling or jogging, is vital for regaining general fitness and losing excess body fat. It can begin six weeks after a normal delivery. If you had a complicated birth or a Caesarean section, you will need to wait longer, so check with your obstetrician first.

Pain in the front of the thighs can be caused by simple muscle fatigue from lack of fitness, referred pain from lower back or pelvic structures, or may even be the remnants of PGP (see previous question). If this pain continues, you should stop exercising and

seek assessment by your chartered physiotherapist.

Pelvic strengthening exercises after Caesarean section

Q I was doing some pelvic strengthening exercises while pregnant but I had a Caesarean section a month ago – should I continue with these or is it too early?

A It is never too early to begin pelvic floor strengthening and you should start fitting it into your routine from day one. Pelvic floor strengthening should be done by all women regardless of how they delivered. The pelvic floor is like a hammock, supporting your bladder, uterus and bowel. After supporting the growing uterus in pregnancy, these muscles need daily strengthening.

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.

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