

PELVIC GIRDLE PAIN IN PREGNANCY



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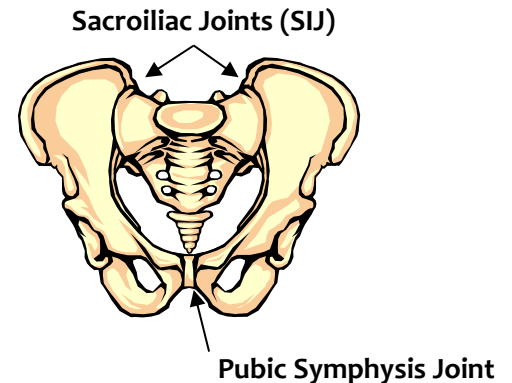
What causes pelvic girdle pain in pregnancy?

During pregnancy your body produces hormones which cause the ligaments (supporting structures for your joints) to soften and stretch. When ligaments stretch, the joints in your body are able to move more and this can result in inflammation, pain and discomfort. The joints in the pelvis usually share the transfer of weight evenly between them but sometimes one joint can become stiff causing the other joint to become overworked and painful. You may experience pain in the front or the back of your pelvis.

In addition to excess movement at these joints, being pregnant causes the muscles in your tummy and pelvic floor to stretch and weaken thus providing less support for the pelvic joints. Your posture also changes with the growing baby which can also put extra stress on the pelvis.

What are the symptoms of Pelvic Girdle Pain?

- Pain in lower back or buttocks (this may be misdiagnosed as 'sciatica')
- Pain at the front of your pelvis, groin and /or inside of your thighs
- Your leg may feel heavy, dull and hard to lift
- Grinding/clicking sensation in the pubic area when moving
- Pain can be a dull ache or sharp shooting in nature, or both
- Pain usually occurs with activities such as:
 - getting in/out of the car or a bed
 - rolling in bed
 - standing on one leg to get dressed
 - moving an object on the ground with your leg
 - lunging down to pick something up from the floor
 - walking up/down slopes and stairs



Women's Health Physiotherapists are most experienced in treating pelvic girdle pain and may help with the following:

- Loosening stiff joints and stretching tight muscles
- Advising you on postures including use of a lumbar roll for sitting
- Teaching you movement strategies to unload painful structures
- Designing an exercise program to strengthen the muscles that support your spine and pelvis
- Providing you with a supportive belt, belly band, or strapping your pelvis for extra support if required
- Advising you on appropriate exercise or sport
- Suggesting positions for labour that will decrease pressure on your pelvic joints
- Applying and giving advice regarding the use of heat or ice
- Referring you on for hydrotherapy, acupuncture or massage if required
- Advising on the use of crutches if required
- Preventing the development of poor movement patterns which can lead to longer term pain

Do:

- ✓ Seek physiotherapy advice early.
- ✓ Ensure you are taking regular rests during the day
- ✓ Keep your knees together when rolling in bed and transferring in and out of car (a plastic bag under your bottom helps you swivel in the chair)
- ✓ Sleep with a pillow between your legs
- ✓ Use an icepack or heat pack (whichever provides the most comfort) for no more than 20 minutes at a time & repeat every 2 hrs. Ensure a protective layer between packs and skin.

- ✓ Wear supportive sneakers when walking. Take smaller footsteps when walking.
- ✓ Stay active with low impact exercises- swimming, water aerobics and stationary cycling are good options. Pregnancy specific exercise classes with a trained physiotherapist can also be a valuable option.
- ✓ Engage your pelvic floor and abdominal muscles before lifting. (Your physio can teach you how). Stand as close to the object as you can, bend at your hips and knees, keep your back straight and avoid twisting
- ✓ Always use a stroller for toddlers, even for short trips
- ✓ Accept help from family and friends or external supports

Try to Avoid

- × Standing on one leg when dressing
- × Heavy lifting or pushing
- × Lifting more than 4kg (lift a toddler if you have no other choice, rather than from habit)
- × Sitting with your legs crossed
- × Leaning into one hip/carrying children on your hip
- × Yoga or exercises that require lunges, or uneven distribution of weight
- × Stairs and stepping over things
- × Pushing a shopping trolley
- × Vacuuming/mopping
- × Running
- × Wearing shoes with a heel
- × No breaststroke if swimming

After the birth of your baby:

- It may take some time for your symptoms to go away completely, so it is vital that you continue to manage your symptoms and seek further help from your physiotherapist.
- Most women will be symptom free by 12 weeks post birth. A small number of women will go on to experience symptoms well beyond this time and will benefit from ongoing physiotherapy.
- You may find pain is significantly reduced immediately after delivery and in the following weeks due to reduced activity when recovering from the birth, however symptoms may re-present when you increase activity again back to desired levels
- Recurrence in your next pregnancy is common. Seek referral to a physiotherapist early in your next pregnancy or, if trying to conceive, start a core stability exercise program to prepare for pregnancy

Referral to Eastern Health Women's Health Physiotherapy services can be made by either:

- Obstetrician / Midwife to Eastern Health Outpatient Physiotherapy Services
- Self-Referral/ GP to Eastern Health Community Physiotherapy Services (charges apply)
- Contact 1300 342 255 to be directed to appropriate department.

Resources:

Pelvic Instability Australia Support Group

<http://www.piaaustralia.com/index.html>

Specialist Women's Health Physiotherapists (Private, Self-Referral or via GP referral – charges apply)

<http://www.physiotherapy.asn.au/APAWCM/Controls/FindaPhysio.aspx>

Local Community Health programs (Self referral to Women's Health services / Physiotherapy – charges apply):

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/primary-and-community-health/community-health/community-health-directory>

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5 Arnold Street, Box Hill, Victoria 3128
1300 342 255

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