

Causes of Low Back Pain During Pregnancy

Mechanical:

During pregnancy, the uterus is enlarged and therefore changes the load and body mechanics. It shifts the center of gravity forwards, increasing the stress on the lower back. This increases the natural inward curvature of the spine, which increases the mechanical strain on the lower back. As you can see in the image below, this increases compression forces of the spine.

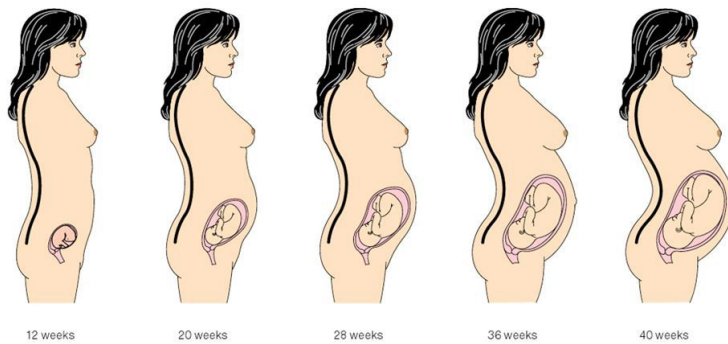


Figure 7-3 Postural changes during pregnancy. Note the increasing lordosis of the lumbosacral spine and the increasing curvature of the thoracic area.

The abdominal muscles also stretch to accommodate the expanding uterus. As they stretch, the muscles become tired and lose their ability to maintain normal body posture, causing the lower back to support the majority of the increased weight.

Hormonal:

Early on in pregnancy hormonal changes can cause inflammation and pain in the back. It has been suggested that the hormone relaxin increases 10-fold in concentration during pregnancy, softening the collagen and causes ligamentous laxity and discomfort. The sacroiliac ligaments, but also other ligaments who surround the pelvic girdle become loose.

Circulatory:

The expanding uterus can press on veins near the pelvis and cause a decrease in the amount of oxygen reaching the tissues of the pelvic and lumbar spine.

Top 5 Moves to do During Pregnancy

1. **Squat:** The squat opens the birth canal by as much as 30%. In general, we usually encourage our mamas to squat (with no load) daily, a minimum of 25 beautiful squats.
2. **Lunge:** The lunge is one of our favorite movements because it will, without a doubt, reveal any pelvic issues or discrepancies from side to side. The lunge, just like the squat, opens the pelvis, but more specifically on one side versus the other. The lunge is also a common position used in labor. So, when a mama tells me that doing lunges is uncomfortable or there is more discomfort from one side versus the other, then I know, as a Doctor of Chiropractic, that something is off within her pelvis and/or associated ligaments and muscles. In general, we usually encourage our mamas to lunge (with no load) for ten reps on each, for a minimum total of 20 a day.
3. **Crawl:** When we say crawl, we literally mean get down on all fours (table top) position, and crawl around. Crawling is as innate in us as blinking. Crawling is especially useful around weeks 25-34 when baby is starting to get in position for birth. Crawling gets baby out of the pelvis while also demanding some trunk stability from mom. If you sit or drive a lot or work predominantly on one side of your body, then, without hesitation, add five minutes of crawling to your daily movement routine.
4. **Walk:** Slow life down and go for 20-30-minute walks at least three times a week. We live in a sedentary, fast-paced, technology-enhanced world. Take time for yourself and the special spirit growing inside of you. Walking allows for movement within the lumbar spine and pelvis and associated musculature while also increasing blood flow to these structures and the organs within them (hello uterus!). Use walking as a time to slow down and connect with the present moments. We recommend not listening to music or using your phone during this walk, but rather connecting with yourself and your baby.
5. **Stability Ball exercises:** The stability ball (also known as a birthing ball) provides easy exercises for pregnancy to improve posture and to help with back ache during pregnancy. A birthing ball is commonly used to help get a baby in the correct position for birth. During pregnancy, these balls provide a great alternative to sitting on a hard surface and can be used as an exercise tool for strengthening your core and helping with balance. Most women like to bounce gently or roll gently forward and backward.

Postpartum

It took the better part of a year to grow and have a baby. While many women feel mostly recovered by 6-8 weeks, it may take longer than this to feel like yourself again. In fact, when starting pelvic floor rehab post pregnancy, it can take 3-6 months to feel the benefits.

There is so much more that happens during and after pregnancy and it surely isn't just about gaining or losing the baby weight. The changes we undergo are massive and I feel they are most often than not glanced over like not being a big deal or we are expected to "just deal, it is normal you've had a baby." you know, the old "bounce back" as if it were magic. Bibbity Bobbity Boo.

Being pregnant and giving birth change you in ways similar to having an actual operation. The physical changes are numerous both inside and out and let us not forget the emotional side. It takes time to fully recover. It takes mindful work if one is to do it properly.

Resources:

1. <https://www.birthfit.com/> (General resource for everything Pregnancy)
2. https://www.physio-pedia.com/Low_Back_Pain_and_Pregnancy
3. <http://www.juliewiebept.com/blog/> (Pelvic floor work)
4. <https://youtu.be/W1awrecq7uM> (The importance of Breath work)
5. <https://www.birthfit.com/blog/2016/09/22/top-14-things-immediate-postpartum> (14 things to do immediate postpartum)
6. <https://spinningbabies.com/>
7. https://www.amazon.com/Well-Adjusted-Babies-Jennifer-Barham-Floreni/dp/0975786008/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1517186742&sr=1-1&keywords=well+adjusted+babies (I consider this book a bible for mothers)
8. <http://www.informedpregnancy.com/> (Dr. Berlin is an award winning prenatal chiropractor, childbirth educator and labor doula).
9. <https://www.amazon.com/Exercising-Through-Pregnancy-James-Clapp/dp/087322941X> (Great book full of information about the benefits of exercising)
10. https://www.amazon.com/Hands-Love-Seven-Steps-Miracle/dp/0967394201/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1517187040&sr=1-1&refinements=p_27%3ADr.+Carol+J.+Phillips (Inspiration birth stories of empowering women)
11. <https://www.amazon.com/Born-USA-Broken-Maternity-Children/dp/0520256336> (How a broken maternity system must be fixed).
12. https://www.amazon.com/Taking-Charge-Your-Fertility-Achievement/dp/0060950536/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1517187210&sr=1-1&keywords=taking+charge+of+your+fertility (A definite guide to birth)