



# Pregnancy related pelvic girdle pain (PGP)

PGP describes pain in the joints that make up the pelvic girdle namely:

- The symphysis pubis joint  
(where pelvis meets at the front) and
- The sacroiliac joints  
(where the pelvis meets the sacrum at the back)

## Why it happens

Sometimes there is no obvious explanation. Usually there is combination of factors including:

- The pelvic girdle joints moving unevenly
- A change in the activity of the muscles of your tummy, pelvic girdle, hip and pelvic floor which can lead to the pelvis becoming less stable
- A previous fall/accident that damaged the pelvis
- A small number of women's pain may be due to hormones

## Some risk factors may include:

- More than one pregnancy
- A hard physical job/workload
- PGP in a previous pregnancy
- Increased body weight and body mass index by the end of pregnancy
- Increased mobility of other joints in the body.

## When is pain felt?

- Weight bearing
- Moving the legs apart
- Turning in bed
- Rising from a chair
- Climbing the stairs
- During intercourse

## How many women get PGP?

- Affects about 1 in 5 pregnant women
- Having some symptoms does not mean you are automatically going to get worse
- If you get the right treatment early during your pregnancy, it can usually be managed well.

## Physiotherapy self help tips

- Sleep in a comfortable position eg. side lying with a pillow between your legs and one under your bump
- Rest when you can
- Keep your knees together when sitting down/rising from chair, put a cushion at your lower back
- Sit down to get dressed
- Use a hot water bottle on your lower back for 10-15mins
- Massage to lower back/buttocks
- Ice – always have a layer of oil or a towel between the ice and the skin to avoid an ice burn. Only keep it on for 3-5mins
- Consider side lying or kneeling on all fours for intercourse.

## Mobility

- Keep as active as possible within pain limits
- Keep your knees together when moving in/out of car, sit on a plastic bag so you can swivel easily
- Roll in and out of bed keeping knees together and squeeze your buttocks, wear satin night clothes
- Go up the stairs leading with the less painful leg and coming down with the more painful one

## Avoid

- Opening your legs far apart
- Crossing your legs
- Standing on one leg
- Bending/twisting to lift
- Carrying a toddler on one hip
- Sitting/standing for long periods
- Vacuuming
- Pushing a shopping trolley
- Lifting heavy objects.

## Labour

Many women worry that their pelvic pain will increase in labour but this is not usually the case when good care is taken to protect the pelvic joints from further strain or trauma. Positions such as kneeling, side lying and standing help avoid further strain on your pelvis.

If you suffer from pubic pain make sure you measure how far apart your knees can separate without pain when lying on your back. Try to avoid moving your legs further apart than this during birth, especially if you have had an epidural or a spinal block.

**Useful website:** [www.pelvicpartnership.org.uk](http://www.pelvicpartnership.org.uk)