



## Back care in pregnancy

Ligaments and muscles provide joint stability and help us maintain a good posture. In pregnancy the hormonal changes can soften down these ligaments. The resulting increases in joint movement may lead to aches and pains in the back and pelvic areas.

Posture: the size of your baby bump will affect your posture and may lead to:

- An increased curve in your lower back
- Your upper body leaning back to compensate
- Your shoulders becoming rounded
- Your chin poking forward
- A weakening of your abdominal muscles.

All of these changes increase the strain on the spine and pelvis which may result in pain.

## When sitting

- Your bottom should be right back in the chair
- Do not cross your legs
- Sit evenly on both buttocks
- Your feet should be flat on the floor
- Use a small rolled towel behind your waist
- At work, make sure that your chair and table height are correct
- Driving- limit when possible, sit correctly and keep your knees together to swivel in and out of the car.

## When standing

- Correct standing posture: keep lower tummy and bottom pulled in, shoulders back, chin tucked in and head straight. Stand evenly on both feet
- Avoid standing for long periods, when standing move from foot to foot
- Clench your buttocks regularly
- Sit often eg. when ironing, preparing vegetables, when dressing
- Walk as much as able, unless it is painful
- Swimming: exercise in water, any movement which does not cause pain

- Flat shoes or small heels only
- Lie with a pillow between your knees and/or under the bump
- Satin night clothes aid turning in bed
- Avoid heavy lifting, vacuuming and pushing a shopping trolley
- Hot water bottle (do not use boiling water) wrapped in a towel and placed over your lower back/hips/buttocks may ease muscle spasm and pain. Do not place heat directly over your bump!
- Warm bath or shower may also ease pain
- Ice can sometimes be preferable to heat: to avoid an ice burn use oil on your skin and put the ice into a damp towel before applying it. Apply for 3-5 minutes only
- Massage in side lying or forward lean sitting, using baby oil/almond oil or moisturising cream (not aromatherapy oils).

If struggling and unable to self manage, then ask your GP or midwife to refer you to physiotherapy.