

Pregnancy and Back Pain

Self Care of the Back During Pregnancy

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During pregnancy, many traditional medical treatments for back pain are not implemented due to potential adverse effects on the developing fetus. Pain medications should be avoided because of the potential for fetal toxicity. Conservative non-pharmaceutical approaches should be tried whenever possible.

Consider the following steps to help manage back pain:

- Practice good posture. Tuck your buttocks under, pull your shoulders back and downward, and stand up straight and tall. This posture will help to reduce the forward curve in the low back subsequently reducing the strain on the facet joints of the low back.
- Take frequent micro breaks. Periodically shift your posture whether sitting or standing. A sustained posture is more likely to cause inflammation of the supportive tissues of the spine. Sit with your feet slightly elevated, and do not cross your legs. Always choose chairs that support your back. If you have to stand, rest one foot on a low step stool.
- Sleep on your side. Sleep on your side, not on your back or stomach. Slightly flex the hips and maintain one or both knees bent. It may help to place a pillow between your knees to reduce the amount of rotation or twisting on the low back.
- Lift properly. When lifting from the ground, squat down and lift with your legs. Do not bend at the waist or lift with your back. Try to avoid sudden reaching movements or lifting anything high over your head. Do not attempt to lift heavy objects or children during your pregnancy. Ask for assistance whenever possible.
- Use supportive footwear. Wear low-heeled shoes with a good arch support.
- Use the right gear. Wear maternity pants with a low, supportive waistband. Consider using a maternity support belt when necessary. Discuss these options with your attending healthcare provider.
- Application of heat. Apply moist heat to the back. Soak in a warm bathtub for 15 minutes, or use a moist heating pad set on the lowest level.
- Get and stay fit. Regular exercise can keep your back and core muscles strong. This will help prevent and relieve back pain. Check with your health care provider to see what type of exercise is best for you.

- Perform regular exercise. Regular exercise helps to stabilize the low back and reduce stress on to the spinal (facet) joints.

Always check with your health care provider before taking any medication to treat your back pain.