



## Tips for Maintaining A Healthy Back During Pregnancy

*Back pain is common to many women during pregnancy; however, there are some very simple things that may decrease or eliminate the pain completely.*

### **A. Good posture is a must!**

1. Make sure that during activity you "tuck your tummy" by tightening your lower abdominals. (This is most easily done by pulling your belly button away from the waistline of your pants.) By doing this, you provide your spine with the stability it needs to function properly, even if other joints in your body are in motion.
2. Make sure to practice contracting your pelvic floor muscles by performing "Kegel" exercises (tighten and lift the muscles around the vaginal and anal openings). The pelvic floor is important for bladder control as well as to provide support to the spine, pelvis, and hips.
3. Sit, don't slouch!
  - a) *Make sure to sit so that your buttocks are scooted all the way back in the seat.*
  - b) *Use a firm chair with a back (as opposed to a stool or bleacher seat) to provide better support.*
  - c) *Use a lumbar (lower back) cushion to assist in maintaining the proper alignment of your spine.*
  - d) *Avoid crossing your legs. While this may look "pretty," it produces an uneven pull on your pelvis and spine that may cause pain later.*
4. Stand tall!
  - a) *Keep your abdominal muscles "tucked" to provide support to your spine.*
  - b) *If you must stand for a period of time, place one foot slightly in front of the other (about six inches apart). Every five minutes, change feet so that the opposite foot is in front.*
  - c) *Try not to place all your weight on one leg since this produces an uneven pull on your pelvis.*

### **B. Getting comfortable lying down**

1. When lying on your side, use a pillow between your knees, under your tummy, and behind you. This will provide support while controlling the amount of twisting that may occur in a sidelying position.
2. When it's time to get up:
  - a) *Tighten or "tuck" your abdominal muscles.*
  - b) *Roll your entire body onto your side without allowing your body to twist at the waist or hips. Some call this "log rolling."*
  - c) *Slide your feet and lower legs off the bed, while using your arms to push up into sitting. Make sure to keep your back straight.*

**C. Tips to help you do all the things you do:**

1. With every task, "prepare" to support your spine by "tucking" your abdominal muscles.
2. In order to prevent stress on your pelvic floor, perform a Kegel exercise during activities such as bending, lifting, coughing, and sneezing.
3. Use good body mechanics with all activities. Bend at your hips and knees, not your back, and turn by pivoting your feet, not twisting your spine.
4. When it is possible, carry heavy loads near your body and at elbow level. This is nearest the center of gravity of your body and causes the least amount of stress on your back.
5. Don't stay in the same position for extended periods of time.
6. If you must carry a child, make sure to alternate the side on which you carry him/her. It may take an adjustment to carry him/her on the opposite side, but it helps balance the stresses placed on your spine, pelvis, and hips.
7. When mopping or vacuuming, make sure to move your feet; avoid standing in one place and bending/extending with the mop or broom. It helps to lunge with your hips and knees.
8. When you get out of a car, make sure to move your feet out of the car and to the ground together. Push yourself up with your arms and upper leg muscles. (Getting into a car is done in a similar way.)

**D. When you do have pain...**

1. Take frequent breaks when you are involved in activities that cause pain. Make sure that your break involves activity or rest in a position that offers support to your spine (as described above).
2. Massage by a licensed massage therapist\* or even your partner may help alleviate back discomfort.
3. Use ice for painful areas, up to 15 minutes, three to five times per day. (You can make your own ice pack in a sealed plastic bag with three parts water, one part rubbing alcohol. Store in a freezer. We recommend using a double bag.)
4. Use heat for an "achy back" or stiffness. Moist heat from a water bottle or a microwavable moist heat pad is best, and should be used no more than 10-20 minutes, three to five times per day.

*\* Community Health Network offers licensed massage therapists experienced in pregnancy and post-partum massage at all Rehab and Sports Medicine locations.*

*If you need assistance with the exercises above or continue to have pain, consult your physician or contact one of the Community Health Network Rehab & Sports Medicine Centers to consult with a physical therapist:*

**Anderson**

*ProCare Rehabilitation  
2519 East 10th Street  
Anderson, IN 46012  
765-640-8062*

**East**

*Rehab & Sports Medicine Center - East  
5506 E. 16th Street, Suite B-10  
Indianapolis, IN 46218  
317-355-5905*

**Fishers**

*Rehab & Sports Medicine  
Center - Ohio Road  
13121 Ohio Road, Suite 140  
Fishers, IN 46037  
317-621-1400*

**North**

*Rehab & Sports Medicine Center - Hillsdale  
6922 Hillsdale Court  
Indianapolis, IN 46250  
317-621-7820*

**Rehab & Sports Medicine Center - Carmel**

*11911 North Meridian Street, Suite 160  
Carmel, IN 46032  
317-621-6880*

**South**

*Rehab & Sports Medicine Center - South Park  
98 South Park Boulevard  
Greenwood, IN 46143  
317-887-7165*