



Backache, sciatica and pubic pain

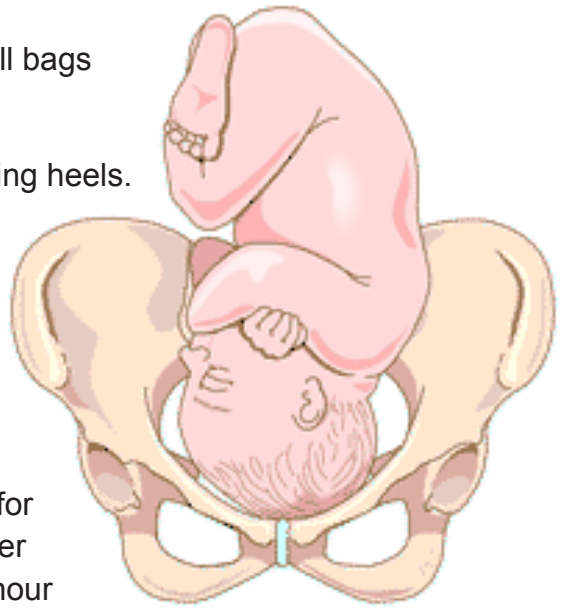
Pregnancy backache results from relaxation of joints, ligaments and muscles, and increasing weight accentuates the curve in the small of your back. Pain can occur in your lower back, hips, pubic area, shoulders, neck, ribs or breastbone. Nerve compression can cause sharp shooting pain down your legs (sciatica). Pubic pain (symphysis pubis discomfort or SPD) occurs because the hormones make your pelvis unstable.

Self-help tips for coping with backache, sciatica and pubic pain

- Stand up straight and tall; point your chin down to prevent your head tilting back. If you become tired when walking, don't force yourself to keep going as you may strain ligaments further
- Ask toddlers to climb up to you rather than bending down to them – and never ever carry a toddler on one hip
- In bed, use pillows for support; keep your thighs parallel to prevent your top leg twisting across your body (recovery position). When getting out of bed, roll onto one side, push yourself up to a sitting position, then slowly stand up
- Ask for help with housework; sit down to iron or press just a few items at a time (or ask someone else to do it!). Ask someone to empty the dishwasher, clean the bath and vacuum the floor so you don't have to stretch and bend



- Use a trolley when shopping, and carry small bags in each hand, rather than one large one
- Wear comfortable shoes with broad supporting heels.
- Get properly fitted for a maternity bra so your breasts are supported by wide straps and adequate cups, avoiding extra strain on your shoulders and rib cage (which can cause heartburn)
- Don't be afraid to ask someone to stand up for you on the bus, train or tube (metro); consider changing your working hours to avoid rush-hour
- When driving, sit tall, make yourself comfortable – and then adjust your rear view mirror. You may need to adjust the mirror each morning and evening as your posture changes during the day.
- At your desk, keep both feet on the floor, don't cross your legs and walk about regularly
- Readjust your computer screen so that you are not hunched over the keyboard; place your mouse mat close enough to avoid stretching.
- If your work involves standing, try shifting from one foot to the other and sit down when you can. You are entitled to equipment such as special chairs or other facilities which make your working life easier whilst pregnant
- Gentle exercise, walking and stretching may relieve stiffness and pain.
- Swimming can help, but keep your neck and spine straight, especially if you swim breast-stroke
- See your doctor if you are in severe or constant pain, have vaginal bleeding, cystitis or pain when passing urine, abdominal pain or contractions



Complementary therapies for backache, sciatica and pubic pain

- Osteopathy, chiropractic, cranio-sacral therapy or acupuncture are probably the most effective treatments for backache, sciatica and pubic, coccyx or groin pain

- Yoga, tai chi or relaxation classes – inform the teacher that you are pregnant
- Alexander technique classes are occasionally available specifically for expectant mothers, teaching you how to use and move your body in a more efficient way
- Massage the painful area gently but avoid direct massage over areas of sciatica. A gentle, full body or back, neck and shoulders massage can be very relaxing
- Reflexology can be effective; reflex zone therapy specifically targets your problem areas
- Aromatherapy oils - ylang ylang, black pepper or lavender (*lavandula angustifolia*) – add up to 3 drops (total) blended in a teaspoon of grapeseed carrier oil and mixed well into your bath water
- Try two drops of olive Bach flower remedy in a small glass of water to relieve tiredness and weariness. Rescue remedy cream can be helpful to ease mild muscular aches
- Homeopathic remedies may help, but it is wise to consult a qualified practitioner who can select the most appropriate remedy for your specific symptoms

Always inform your midwife if you are using any natural remedies or receiving treatment from a complementary therapist

For more individualised advice on coping with backache, sciatica or pubic pain, call Expectancy on **0906 400 6227** (calls charged at £1.50 per minute, from a BT landline; calls from mobiles and other networks may vary).