

# Pregnancy-related pain or pelvic girdle pain

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## Information for patients

This leaflet will provide you with some simple information and advice on how to manage your pelvic girdle pain. If you have any queries or concerns please contact your GP.

### What is pelvic girdle pain?

Pelvic Girdle Pain (PGP) is an umbrella term for diagnoses such as sacroiliac joint dysfunction or symphysis pubis dysfunction. It commonly refers to any pains affecting the hips, lower back, groin, buttocks or inner thigh pain specifically during pregnancy.

### Causes of PGP

PGP is commonly a result of normal hormonal, postural and muscular changes that happen during pregnancy. Lumbo-pelvic pain affect 50% to 70% of pregnant women. In pregnancy, it is common to gain up to about 2 to 3 stone over 9 months, which is mainly because of the growing foetus, amniotic fluid and placenta. This normal increased weight gain can also be a cause of PGP.

### Symptoms

You may get pain in and around your hip, particularly around your groin and buttocks or on the front of your pubic bone. You may also have some stiffness after sitting for a long period of time or discomfort after long periods of activity. Discomfort is common when using stairs, getting in and out of bed, and heavy lifting. You may also find that the stiffness is eased with gentle movement.

### Management

- Relative rest: reduce activities that are aggravating your symptoms, for example, the amount of time you spend on your feet.
- Exercise: you should complete specific exercises that aim to keep your pelvis and muscles moving but do not make the pain worse. There are some exercises below with a few examples of stretches that can be helpful to manage your pain.
- Alternative sleeping positions: for example, place pillows underneath your bump and between your legs for comfort. Getting in and out of bed with knees together can also be more comfortable.
- Plan your day: for example, if stairs make your pain worse, bring everything downstairs in the morning. Bring a rucksack with you to help carry heavy shopping. Schedule hospital

appointments on the same day. Consider activities that are essential and try to plan around them.

- Painkillers: pain relief can help manage the discomfort in the short term as your GP advises. If you have any questions please speak to a pharmacist or GP.

## Follow-up

You do not routinely require physiotherapy for this type condition. Most women find they improve with time and simple exercises. If your pain does not improve after 4 to 6 weeks then you may benefit from physiotherapy. PGP usually resolves after labour and most women do not have lingering symptoms postnatally (after the birth). If you are still struggling postnatally, we recommend you contact your GP to refer you to your local physiotherapy department.

## Pelvic floor

Your pelvic floor is made up of four different muscles and multiple layers of connective tissue and fascia. The pelvic floor musculature helps support normal intra-abdominal function whilst also assisting during pregnancy.

## Useful resources

Squeezy App: A NHS pelvic floor application that provides information on how to do pelvic floor muscle exercises

Prenatal and postnatal NHS Pilates/Yoga video: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/prenatal-and-postnatal-exercise/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/prenatal-and-postnatal-exercise/)

## Pelvic floor exercises:

Endurance holds:

Tighten your pelvic floor muscles, hold them tight for 1 to 2 seconds, then release and let them fully relax. Gradually increase the duration you can hold the contraction. Repeat the squeeze and hold until the pelvic floor muscles tire.

Short pulses:

Quickly tighten your pelvic floor muscles, then immediately let them go again. Always let the muscles fully relax after each squeeze.

Aim to be able to do 10 long squeezes, and 20 short squeezes. You may need to start with 'little and often' if you find that you can only hold the squeeze for a short time. You should do your pelvic floor muscle exercises at least 3 to 4 times each day. We recommend you start these exercises in a lying position to begin with and progress to a sitting position.

## Pilates-based PGP exercises:

Childs pose stretch:



Start in four point kneel with wide knees and slowly sit back into your feet.  
Head down and sink your shoulders into the mat.  
Take deep breaths in this position.  
Hold for 45 seconds.

Piriformis stretch:



Start in sitting.  
Bring your foot up to your opposite knee so your leg is crossed over.  
Gently bring the bent knee up towards your chest.  
Lean forward slightly.  
Hold for 45 seconds.

Transverse Abdominus Activation (core activation) in four point kneel:



Start in four point kneeling.  
Keep the middle of your back still, this is not a lift up from your back.  
Gently squeeze your tummy muscles by imagining drawing your belly button towards your spine.  
Take 3 deep breaths in this position, you should be able to hold this contraction and breathe.  
Hold for 10 seconds and relax.

Seated back stretch:



Position yourself sitting on a chair with your feet flat on the ground.  
Slowly lift your arm up to the side and leaning over towards the opposite side.  
You should feel a light stretch on your flank.  
Hold this for 10 seconds and then repeat on the other side.

## Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments

at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

### **Care provided by students**

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

### **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 3601

Email: [kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net)

You can also contact us by using our online form at **[www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals](http://www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals)**

**If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.**