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How to cope with groin and pelvic pain in pregnancy

Aches and pains in pregnancy are to be expected. After all, you're growing a baby – and the process can take its toll on your body. Pain around the pelvis can be particularly uncomfortable and can make simple tasks like going upstairs difficult. But what causes pain around the groin and pelvis during pregnancy – and what can you do about it?

What is pelvic girdle pain and what causes it?

Pelvic girdle pain affects around one in five women and can affect your mobility and quality of life¹. The pain can range from mild to severe and can occur at any stage in the **pregnancy**, but it is more common in the later stages.

The symptoms include pain in the pubic region, **lower back**, hips, groin or thighs. Certain movements can make the pain worse, such as walking on uneven surfaces, getting in and out of the car, climbing the stairs, getting in the bath, or rolling over in bed.

Symphysis pubis dysfunction (SPD) refers to discomfort in the pelvic region. The symptoms include discomfort around the pubic bone, pain in the lower back and pain in the perineum – the area between the vagina and the anus. In pregnancy, it is thought to be caused by the release of the hormone relaxin, which helps to loosen the ligaments and muscles in your hips, pelvis, pelvic floor and stomach. This helps you give birth, but means your joints can become unbalanced and painful.

Sophie King, a midwife for the pregnancy charity **Tommy's** says: "Groin pain or pelvic pain is caused by stiffness or uneven movements of the pelvic joints. For some people the joint becomes less stable and that can cause inflammation and pain, with varying degrees of severity."

It's not known exactly why it affects some pregnant people more than others, but it is believed to be linked to a number of issues.

"This includes previous damage to the pelvis and the weight and position of your baby," says King. "The pain is usually felt deep in the pubic area and groin and some people might also feel a grinding or clicking sensation in the pubic area too."

You may be more likely to struggle with pelvic girdle pain if you have had a back problem or have injured your pelvis in the past. People with [hypermobility syndrome](#), a condition in which your joints stretch more than normal, may also be susceptible.

Should you worry about groin pain?

Groin pain won't affect the health of your baby. However, it can make life uncomfortable for you.

"Particularly if you experience more severe pain, the condition can make it difficult for you to continue doing normal day to day activities," says King.

"It can also affect your [sleep](#), which is likely to make your [emotional health](#) suffer. It's important that you don't just put up with it."

However, if you experience any unusual aches or pains in pregnancy, it is best to speak to your doctor, midwife or if you are immediately concerned, the Maternity Assessment Unit of the hospital you plan to give birth at.

What to do about groin pain during pregnancy

Speak to your doctor or midwife

Talk to your GP or midwife as they may be able to refer you to a physiotherapist who has experience of treating pelvic joint pain. "It's usually possible to treat, and the earlier you're diagnosed and start being treated, the better," says King.

"Depending on your [physiotherapist](#), treatment will vary but might include hands-on therapy to change the movement of muscles and joints in the pelvis, or exercises to strengthen your pelvic floor, stomach, back and hip muscles."

There are some safe [pain medication](#) options to take during [pregnancy](#). It's important to discuss your options with your doctor, midwife or pharmacist.

Try swimming

You may also be encouraged to do certain physiotherapy exercises in a swimming pool. [Swimming](#) can be a gentle, relaxing way to get moving and exercise during pregnancy without putting pressure on your joints.

However, King says, breaststroke can make pelvic pain worse due to the outwards movement of the legs. "It's really important to stay active during pregnancy but try different [exercises](#) until you find one that works for you," she adds.

Try a support belt

You may benefit from wearing a pelvic support belt or a belt that can support your lower back.

Make small day-to-day changes

Because parting your legs will likely make the pain worse, it can help to minimise your range of movement by taking stairs one at a time or putting on trousers while sitting down. Wearing flat, supportive shoes can help prevent your joints from becoming sore.

Further reading

1. [RCOG: Pelvic girdle pain and pregnancy](#)

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