

Physiotherapy Advice in Pregnancy

Standing - the way that you stand can make a big difference during pregnancy. Try not to stand in one position for too long. Stand tall, and keep your bottom gently tucked under.

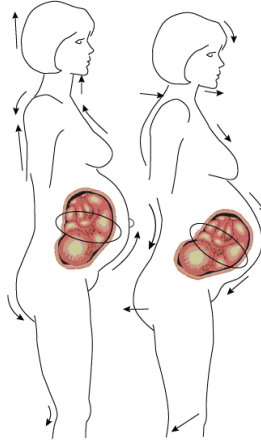
Correct posture

Head: lifted up with ears in line with neck

Shoulders: back and down

Back: contract abdominals to support baby. Tuck bottom under and tilt pubic bone slightly forward

Knees: bend to ease body weight over feet



Incorrect posture

Head: chin forward, eyes down

Shoulders: slouching

Back: slack muscles tilt pelvis forward, placing added strain on abdominals

Knees: locked back strains joints and tilts pelvis forwards

Sitting - your hips should be level with or slightly higher than your knees. Your bottom should be at the back of the chair, your back should be supported by the chair and your feet should rest flat on the floor.



If you work in an office, the top of your computer screen should be set up just below eye level. Your keyboard should be at a comfortable height so your forearms are flat. Try to get up from your chair regularly to avoid becoming stiff. Try not to cross your legs as it can slow the return of blood back up to your heart and may cause varicose veins.

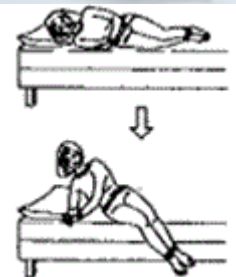
When sitting on the sofa try not to slump - use cushions to support your back and have your feet resting on the floor. It may help to lie on your side if you are watching TV or relaxing.

In bed - avoid lying flat on your back for long periods of time. It is better to lie on your side – try putting a pillow between your knees to support your back and pelvis. It may help to have a small pillow under your bump.

If you are getting pain in your hip from lying on your side, it may help to place a duvet under your sheet or use a memory-foam topper for a softer mattress.



Getting in and out of bed - roll onto your side, making sure to move your shoulders, hips and knees at the same time - like rolling a log. Let your legs ease off the edge of the bed toward the floor. At the same time, use your arms to push yourself up into a sitting position. Doing this as one movement can be more comfortable. To get into bed, reverse this movement.



General Exercise - regular exercise can keep you mobile and help to relieve stress. Pregnancy Yoga and Pilates can help you to stretch and strengthen your muscles, as well as being relaxing. If you go to exercise classes, make sure your teacher is appropriately qualified and knows that you are pregnant. You might like to try swimming or aquanatal classes because the water will support your increasing weight.

Around the house - if you have low back pain you may find it difficult to do activities which involve bending over. Try these techniques;

- Emptying the dishwasher – crouch down instead of bending forward.
- Making the bed - kneel on the floor to tuck the sheets in.
- Vacuuming - try and get someone else to do it!

Lifting - if you do have to lift, keep your back straight and bend your knees. Bring the load close to your body, draw in your tummy muscles and tighten your pelvic floor before actually lifting the object. Use your strong thigh muscles to stand up. You can also lift small children in this way.

Shopping - plan your shop before you go - make a list. If you are out shopping, take regular breaks and stop for a snack. Shopping online may be another alternative to consider. At the supermarket use a smaller trolley or ask for help. Most supermarkets will pack for you and load your car.

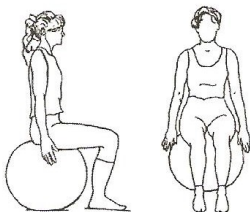
Exercises



Pelvic Tilt in Standing - this exercise strengthens your lower abdominal muscles and can help to relieve backache.

Action - stand with your back leaning on a wall. Draw in the lower part of your tummy below your naval. Gently tilt your hips by pressing the small of your back into the wall (this will also pull your pubic bone up towards your ribs). Hold for 5 seconds, breathing normally, and then relax. Repeat 5 times.

Some people find it easier to do this exercise and gain further relief by using a **gym ball** (also known as an exercise ball, birthing ball) - these can be purchased quite cheaply from many supermarkets or chain stores. Ask someone else to inflate the ball for you if possible. The average size of a gym ball is 65 cm; this suits most women. You should be able to sit on the ball with your hips slightly higher than your knees. When sitting on your ball for the first time it is advisable to have someone with you for support, or to place the ball in the corner of the room so you can use the walls for support. Many women find it helpful to sit on a gym ball for short periods.



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Pelvic Tilt on the Ball - sit up as straight as comfortable with your hips and knees bent. Your hips should be slightly higher than your knees. Place your feet flat on the floor and relax your shoulders.

Action - flatten your lower back by sliding your hips forward on the ball. The ball should move forward slightly as you do this. Keep your chest up and your head over your shoulders allowing your lower back and pelvic muscles to do the work.

If you are still having pain which stops you from doing your usual activities after trying the advice in this leaflet, please call the number below to arrange an appointment with the physiotherapist:

**Pelvic and Maternal Health Physiotherapy
Norfolk and Norwich University Trust Hospital
Colney Lane, Norwich NR4 7UE
Telephone 01603 287130 (24 hour answer phone)**