

## Back Pain during Pregnancy

### Introduction



Almost half of all pregnant women suffer from lower back pain. Back pain may be experienced any time during pregnancy; however, it most commonly occurs later in the pregnancy as the weight of the baby increases. Back pain can disturb the daily routine or interfere with a good night's sleep.

Certain treatment options such as applying ice or hot water packs along with adopting a good posture and starting a lower back exercise programme may decrease stress on the lower back, thus relieving the back pain to some extent. Trying to become fit and taking care of any existing back problems before one gets pregnant can help prevent back pain during pregnancy.

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### What Are The Causes Of Back Pain During Pregnancy?

- Back pain during pregnancy is related to a number of factors. Some women begin to experience lower back pain at the beginning of the pregnancy. Some causes of back pain or discomfort during pregnancy are as follows:
- Increase of hormones: Hormones released during pregnancy cause the ligaments (tissue that connects one bone to the other) in the pelvic area to soften and the joints to loosen in preparation for childbirth. These changes occurring in the joints and ligaments may affect the support that the back normally experiences.
- Overweight: Being overweight before conceiving puts one at a high risk of developing back pain during pregnancy.
- Having back pain prior to getting pregnant: This is also one major factor that contributes to back pain.
- Centre of gravity: The centre of gravity gradually shifts forward as the baby grows. To avoid falling forward, one has to compensate by leaning back; this can strain the muscles in the lower back and contribute to back pain.

- Additional weight: The developing baby, who the mother has to carry all throughout the day every day, also creates an additional weight that the back must support.
- Posture or position: Improper standing or sitting posture, bending over from the waist, or standing or sitting for a long time can lead to or increase the back pain.



- Stress: Stress usually finds the weak spots in the body, and, hence, because of the changes in the pelvic area, there may be an increase in back pain during stressful periods of the pregnancy.

### How Can One Prevent Or Minimize The Back Pain During Pregnancy?

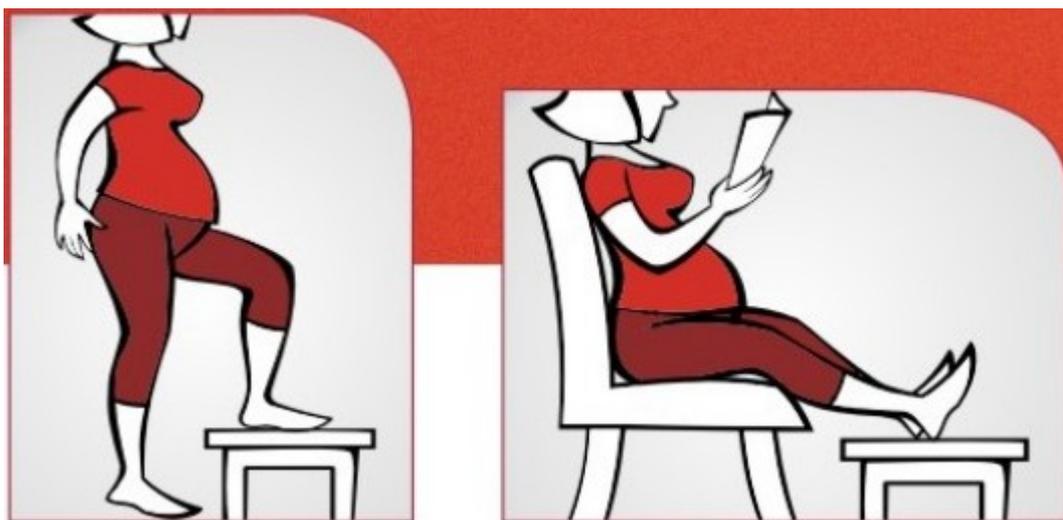
Back pain may not be completely preventable; but, there are things that one can do to reduce the severity or frequency of back pain:



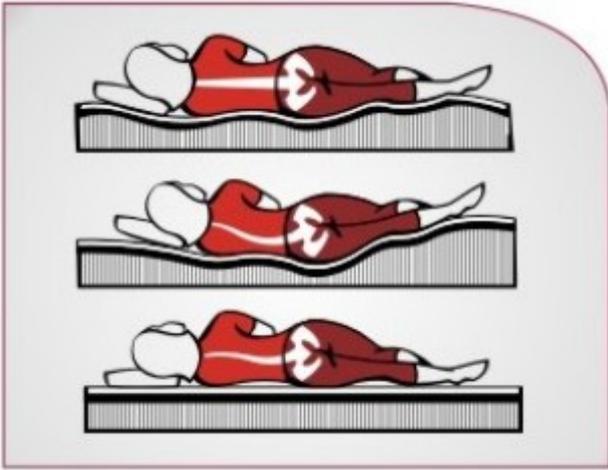
- Start the pregnancy with strong abdominal muscles: If one is trying to get pregnant, talk to the doctor about some exercises that can help strengthen the back and abdominal muscles before conceiving. This can help align the body and decrease the tendency to develop a swayback posture.



- Use the proper posture when lifting anything: Don't bend directly down from the waist. To pick up something, keep the back straight, bend the knees, squat and then lift, so that the pressure falls on the legs.
- Avoid lifting heavy objects.
- Keep feet raised whenever possible: If one is sitting for longer periods, sit with the legs propped on a small footstool. If one is standing for longer periods, rest one foot on a footstool; alternate from time to time to relax the muscles in both the legs.



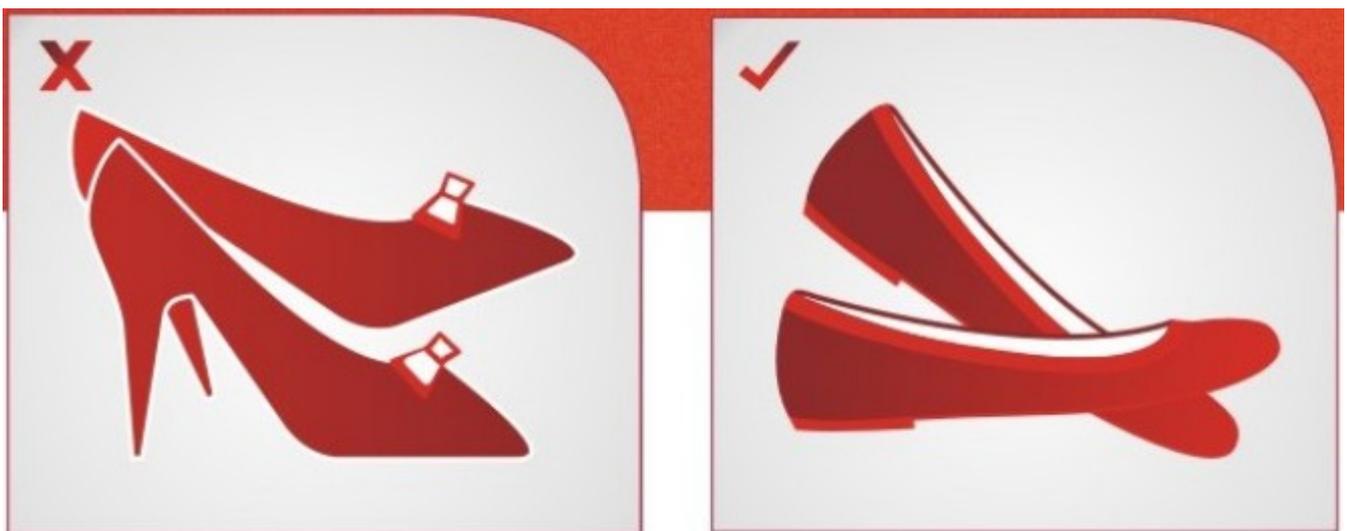
- Take frequent breaks to get up and walk around: These will help stretch the muscles and ligaments and relieve back pain during pregnancy.
- Sleep on a mattress that gives a good support to the back.



- Sleep in a comfortable position: Avoid sleeping on the back. Bend the knees and sleep with a pillow placed between them for support. Another pillow placed under the tummy may also help.



- Avoid wearing high heels: These do not provide adequate support; on the contrary they add more pressure on the back.



- Sit on chairs and sofas with good back support: Additionally, place a small pillow to support the lower back and help reduce the strain.
- Use heat to ease the back pain: Place a hot water bottle or a hot water bag (wrapped in a towel, depending on the tolerability) on the area that is causing discomfort. One can also alternate heat packs with ice packs.

- Exercises: Exercises will support and help strengthen the back and abdomen, sometimes showing results within a few days or weeks. Perform only those exercises that are approved by the doctor to avoid any complications.
- Get a support belt: This is tied under the abdomen for a good support.
- Medications: These are used only in cases of moderate to severe back pain. Do not take any medications without the doctor's consent as these can be harmful for the baby.



## When To Contact The Doctor?

Experiencing back pain is, in itself, usually not a reason to contact the doctor, but there are situations where contacting the doctor is necessary. These are as follows:

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- Severe back pain
  - Severe back pain with fever
  - Pain that doesn't go away even after resting for some time
  - Increasingly severe or sudden onset of back pain
  - Rhythmic cramping pains; this could be a sign of pre-term labour

For further queries, kindly consult your doctor.

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Rating:



Your rating: None

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