



## **Advice During and After Pregnancy**

Our pelvic joints (SIJs and pubic symphysis) line up vertically, and can therefore be prone to a little slip and slide during daily activities such as when we walk, change positions and carry load. We have certain muscles that work throughout the day to help minimise this slip and slide and help hold our joints firmly together.

During pregnancy there is an increase in pregnancy hormones (which help loosen our joints) and also a change in posture. This can contribute to our pelvic joints sliding further than usual which can create discomfort either in the joint itself or surrounding muscles.

## **Common Aches and Pains During Pregnancy: What Can I do?**

### **Pubic Pain**

#### **Reasons can include:**

- Not enough compression from muscles that support the pubic joint. Muscles that support the pubic joint are the front pelvic floor muscles (the muscle that controls the bladder)
- Posture; excessive anterior pelvic tilt
- Position of baby as it engages

#### **Tips to Reduce Pubic Pain:**

- Try a gentle front pelvic floor (bladder) lift just before you move, this might help support the joint as you attempt to take load, get out of a chair or walk
- Ensure your daily posture is not tending toward anterior pelvic tilt, this can place extra load onto your pubic bone (think about the pelvis as a bucket of water; don't let too much water escape from the front of the bucket!). Try to imagine a small lift of the pubic area with the front abdominal muscles, without tucking your tail under or clenching your buttock muscles.
- A pelvic belt is sometimes useful if it is too painful to walk.

### **Rib Pain:**

#### **Reasons can include:**

- Expansion of rib cage with growth of bub can place pressure on thoracic and rib joints
- Carrying bub repeatedly on one side which creates habitual uneven twist in the top half of the body

#### **Tips to Reduce Rib Pain:**

- Gentle thoracic stretches to help keep the rib cage moving. These can include cat/cow stretch on all fours, and thread needle stretch on all fours.
- Ensure even carrying postures and utilise supports such as baby slings and carriers



## **SIJ and Back Pain**

### **Reasons can include:**

- Not enough compression from supportive muscles. These muscles include lower abdominals (which wrap around the pelvis) and the gluteals.
- Posture: standing habitually on one leg more than the other (with lateral pelvic tilt), or with excessive anterior sway
- Asymmetric hip muscle tightness

### **Tips to Reduce Back and SIJ Pain**

- Try to gently lift your lower abdominals and front pelvic floor especially when you go to move, get out of a chair, roll over in bed or at times you have experienced your pain.
- Sleep with a pillow between your knees and wear slippery pyjamas to bed so it is easier to roll over at night.
- Gentle hip stretches to buttock and thigh, knee hug stretch
- Maintain even posture in standing, avoiding lateral tilt for long periods

## **Coccyx Pain**

### **Reasons can include:**

- Injury during labour, usually heals within 4 to 6 weeks
- Overactivity in back pelvic floor muscles
- Posture: Excessive posterior pelvic tilt in sitting (too much water out the back of the bucket!)

### **Tips to Reduce Coccyx Pain:**

- Using a coccyx cushion can help take the pressure off the coccyx for a short time after delivery if it is too painful to sit.
- Ensure sitting posture is accurate: even and wide sitting bones, try to separate your buttock cheeks (can help relax tight coccyx muscles)
- Self massage into buttock with a massage ball.
- Ensure that when you contract your pelvic floor, it is more at the front than the back. Overactivity of the back part of the pelvic floor can sometimes increase coccyx pain.

*Temporary aches and pains can be a natural part of change in the pelvis that occurs during and after pregnancy. Most aches and pains can be managed with correct activation of support muscles, gentle stretches, being mindful of sitting and standing postures.*

***Assessment from your local physiotherapist is always recommended to determine the causes of your symptoms unique to your body. This information is intended as a guide only and does not replace individual health assessment and treatment.***