

# Pregnancy and Back Pain

Pregnancy is a joyous time, expectant mothers looking forward to the birth of their child. Often times though, pregnancy brings about new aches and pains, including the common problem of back pain.

Back pain during pregnancy is caused by many factors and can include:

- A shift in posture as a result of pregnancy related weight gain. The extra weight in the front of the body creates additional pressure on the lower spine and results in a shifting of the expectant mom's center of gravity.
- Weakened abdominal muscles. Usually used to help support the spine, abdominal muscles become relaxed and loose as a result of hormonal changes.

The following recommendations may be helpful to help eliminate or minimize back pain associated with pregnancy:

- **Wear sensible shoes.** Avoid high heels, and select shoes with good arch support.
- **Sleep on your side.** Sleeping on your back creates pressure on your spine. The best way to sleep is on your side with your knees bent. Consider putting a pillow between your knees. Additionally, if your mattress is too soft – place a board between the mattress and box-spring.
- **Exercise.** Talk to your health care professional about exercises that will help strengthen and improve your muscle tone.
- **Avoid lifting heavy objects.** If you can not get help, be sure to use proper lifting techniques. For example, squat down or kneel down on one knee to lift objects instead of bending over to pick them up. If possible, break heavy loads into multiple smaller loads. You may have to lift more often, but it will be less stressful on your back.
- **Use proper posture** and sit in chairs with **good back support.** If needed, use a pillow in the lower part of your back.

To help alleviate back pain during pregnancy, talk to your physician. He or she may recommend cold and hot spot treatments. Additionally, massage may be helpful. Do not take any medications without your physician's approval. Your physician may prescribe a pregnancy support belt.

Talk to your physician if your back pain persists – in some instances, persistent, dull lower-back pain may be a sign of pre-term labor. If at any time, you develop radiating pain, numbness, tingling or weakness in your legs, call your physician. The good news is that back pain usually disappears after pregnancy.

