

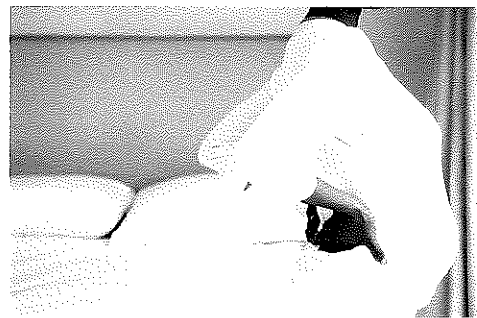


Pregnancy and Physical Therapy

During pregnancy, a woman's body changes in several ways as the fetus develops. Some of these changes can lead to pain and/or pelvic floor dysfunction. Your pelvic floor physical therapist will work with you during this special time to help reduce any pain you may be experiencing.

Causes of Low Back Pain During Pregnancy

The added weight of the abdomen during pregnancy causes many women to lean back onto the heels. The muscles of the abdomen must relax to allow for this weight shift. This leads to an increased curve in the lower back (lumbar spine), tightness in the front of the hips, and weakness in the muscles that make up the buttocks (gluteals). This is called an **anterior pelvic tilt** and is a major cause of low back pain in pregnancy.



The sacroiliac joints (SIJ) connect the pelvis and the sacrum (the large triangular bone at the spine's base). Pregnancy hormones increase the mobility of your joints to prepare your body for delivery, which may result in pain developing in this area. A significant amount of stress is placed on the sacroiliac joints by movements that require your weight be supported on a single limb. For example, you may start to feel pain while getting dressed or going up the stairs.

We will work closely with you to correct your posture and help support the pelvis and lumbar spine to prevent pain. A support belt may also be a good option for those suffering with SIJ pain to help relieve pressure on the joints. You and your physical therapist will discuss what the best options are for you.

Sciatica

The piriformis is a muscle in the buttock region that helps the hip joint move. It plays a major role in movement of the lower body and in overall balance.

The piriformis tends to become very tight and short during pregnancy. This might cause a woman to walk with a waddling gait pattern with her toes pointed outwards. When this happens, it can sometimes lead to compression of the sciatic nerve, a nerve traveling through the buttocks. Referred to as **sciatica**, symptoms may include feeling a tingling or pain down the back of the leg.

We will work with you and teach you how to correctly stretch the piriformis muscle that could help relieve the pain. Another option we might try is a deep massage to help release the muscle and sciatic nerve.