

Pregnancy related pelvic girdle pain (PGP)

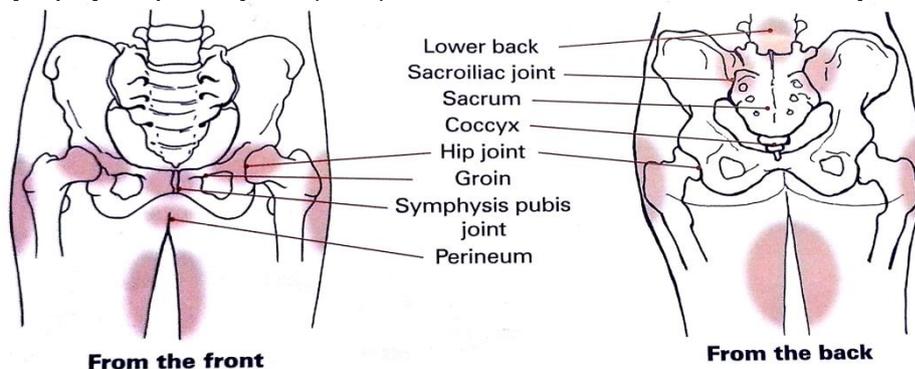
Patient Information

Pregnancy-related Pelvic Girdle Pain (PGP) is common. The sooner it is identified and assessed, the better it can be managed.

Around 1 in 5 pregnant women experience mild discomfort in the back or front of the pelvis during pregnancy. If you have symptoms that do not improve within a week or two, or interfere with your normal day-to-day life, you may have PGP and should ask for help from your midwife, GP, physiotherapist or other health carer.

Women experience different symptoms and these are more severe in some women than others. A range of management options is available to you, based on the type of PGP you are found to have.

PGP describes pain in the joints that make up your pelvic girdle; this includes the symphysis pubis joint (SPJ) at the front and/or the sacroiliac joints (SIJ) at the back.



The discomfort is often felt over the pubic bone at the front, below your tummy, or across one side of the lower back, or both sides. You may experience pain in some or all of the areas shaded in the diagrams above.

With PGP the degree of discomfort you are feeling may vary from being intermittent and irritating to being very wearing and upsetting.

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What causes PGP?

Sometimes there is no obvious cause but usually there is a combination of factors such as:

- The pelvic girdle joints moving un-evenly
- Less movement control of the pelvis and lower back due to a change of activity of the abdominal/pelvic floor/pelvic girdle and hip muscles.
- Previous trauma to the pelvis
- Hormonal cause

General advice during pregnancy

- Be as active as possible within pain limits and avoid activities that make the pain worse
- Ask for and accept help with household chores and involve your partner, family and friends
- Rest when you can
- Sit down to get dressed/undressed, avoid standing on one leg
- Wear flat supportive shoes
- Avoid standing to do such tasks as ironing
- Try to keep knees together when moving in/out of car
- Sleep in a comfortable position with a pillow between your legs
- Avoid activities that causes dooming of your abdomen
- Try different ways of turning in bed e.g. turning over with your knees together and squeezing your buttocks
- Roll in and out of bed on your side, keeping your knees together
- Take the stairs one at a time (try going upstairs leading with your less painful leg and downstairs leading with the more painful one)
- Plan your day - bring everything you need downstairs in the morning
- If using crutches have a small rucksack to carry things in
- Consider alternative positions for sexual intercourse e.g. lying on your side, kneeling on all-fours

Physical activity

Staying active is good for you and your growing baby. You should aim for a low to moderate intensity – able to keep a conversation going while doing your physical activity (the talk test). If you already are physically active – keep going but be prepared to make adjustments. If taking up a new activity, start gradually and avoid movements that make your pain worse, do the “talk test” if unsure about the intensity.

Pelvic Floor Exercises

Pelvic floor muscle exercises (sometimes called Kegels) should include long squeezes and short squeezes, ensuring that you relax and “let go” between each squeeze.

Long squeezes: Tighten your pelvic floor muscles and hold till they tire, then release and let them fully relax.

Short squeezes: Quickly tighten your pelvic floor and immediately let go, always let them fully relax between each squeeze.

Aim to do 10 long squeezes, holding each squeeze for up to 10 seconds, followed by 10 short squeezes. Try to do your pelvic floor exercises at least 3 times per day.

Transversus Abdominis/deep abdominal activation

Activation of your deep abdominal muscles can help to control the movements of your pelvis and lower back and therefore help with pain relief. You can activate the deep abdominals in any position but if you are struggling to find these muscles it can be helpful kneeling on all-fours as you are pulling against gravity.

Breathe in normally and as you breathe out, gently draw the lower part of your stomach (just below your belly button) up and in. You can help this muscle activation by tightening your pelvic floor muscles at the same time. Hold for up to 10 seconds, breathing normally. Relax and repeat at least up to 10 times.

Try to activate the deep abdominal muscles as often as you can throughout the day, especially when you are doing activities that cause pain/discomfort e.g. walking up/down stairs, turning in bed, getting up from sitting.

Physiotherapy treatment

If you are struggling to manage your pain with the exercises and advice only, a physiotherapist may be able to discuss whether individual treatment may be appropriate. This could include;

- Manual therapy
- Acupuncture or TENS
- Hydrotherapy (exercises in water)
- Provision of crutches and/or advice on pelvic girdle support belts

Further Information

If you would like to seek the advice of a physiotherapist, there are a number of options within Wiltshire. Please speak to your GP practice about the ways you can be referred

Useful website:

<http://www.pogp.csp.org.uk>

Safeguarding

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If you or your carer have any concerns about abuse, neglect or your rights in relation to care provided by Wiltshire Health and Care or any other agency or individual, please raise this directly with any Wiltshire Health and Care staff or contact the Safeguarding Adults Team by telephone on: 0300 4560111.

Regarding children, WHC is responsible for providing services in accordance with Section 11 of the Children's Act (1989) and works under the principles of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018).

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any questions, or concerns, suggestions or compliments about our service, please speak to a member of staff.

This information sheet is available in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 0300 1237797 and PALS.wiltshirehealthandcare@nhs.net

Patient and Public Involvement

We value your opinions which will help us to further develop our services.

If you wish to provide feedback or get involved in our patient participation groups, please email the Patient and Public Involvement Officer at ask.wiltshirehealthandcare@nhs.net or telephone 01249 454386.