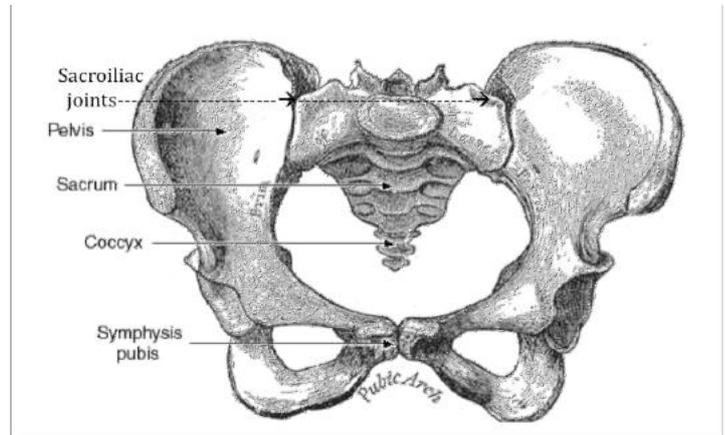


Lower back and pelvic pain during pregnancy

During pregnancy, hormones loosen the body's joints so that the pelvis can expand to make more room for the baby's passage during birth. As the baby grows, the woman's posture also changes. These events can cause discomfort and pain, which may be aggravated by prior instability of the pelvis, weak muscles and poor posture. Pain can cause considerable stress for the pregnant woman, and may cause labour and birth complications due to the baby presenting in positions such as breech, posterior or with a tilted head.



"Ensuring that your pelvis is sitting correctly will allow optimum room for your baby to grow and move. A well functioning nervous and muscular system enables a mother to avoid commonly accepted pregnancy discomforts including back pain, shortness of breath, heartburn, nausea, constipation, haemorrhoids and frequent urination. Research shows that correct alignment of the pelvis and spine contributes to a more straightforward labour." (Well Adjusted Babies by Dr Jennifer Barham-Floeani 2009.)

Most women with pain during pregnancy experience it in the pubic joint at the front of their pelvis, in the sacroiliac joints at the back of their pelvis, in their lower back or hips, or as referred pain down their legs and even into the feet and toes.

*Back pain is common in pregnancy, but **it's not something that you have to put up with!***

If you have any ongoing pain or discomfort in your pelvis or back you are wise to seek a correct diagnosis from a physiotherapist, chiropractor or osteopath who has experience with treating pregnant women. Once you have a diagnosis they may give you treatment and/or exercises to practice at home.

Early diagnosis and treatment may save you from an uncomfortable pregnancy, a complicated labour and ongoing trauma following the birth.

PREGNANCY YOGA & BIRTH WISDOM



Get ready to rock your pregnancy and birth

Whatever your stage of pregnancy, level of fitness or flexibility, you'll be warmly welcomed into our fun classes. We're down to earth and friendly. With all the great information I share you'll be ready to rock your pregnancy and birth.

"I tell every pregnant mummy to go to your yoga classes! I enjoyed my time doing your classes and found them so full of mothering and birthing wisdom and nice to meet other pregnant ladies who are going through it all at the same time." Leesa

**Tuesday evenings 6 - 7.30pm
Saturday mornings 9.30 - 11am**

Listed below are descriptions of four conditions and self-help ideas to prevent or ease discomfort.

Sciatica

The sciatic nerve travels from the lower back, down the back of the legs and into the feet. Inflammation or pressure from the back can make the sciatic nerve painful. There may be weakness, numbness or pins and needles in the leg, shooting or burning that comes and goes and often affects only one side. There may be burning, tingling or pain down the back of the leg to the foot, and there may be backache.

You are *not* more prone to sciatica if you are pregnant. Most women who think they have sciatica during pregnancy actually have sacroiliac joint/pelvic girdle pain (see below).

Treatment and self-help for sciatica are similar to sacroiliac joint pain below.

More information:

<http://www.babycenter.com.au/pregnancy/antenatalhealth/physicalhealth/sciatica/>

5 great stretches:

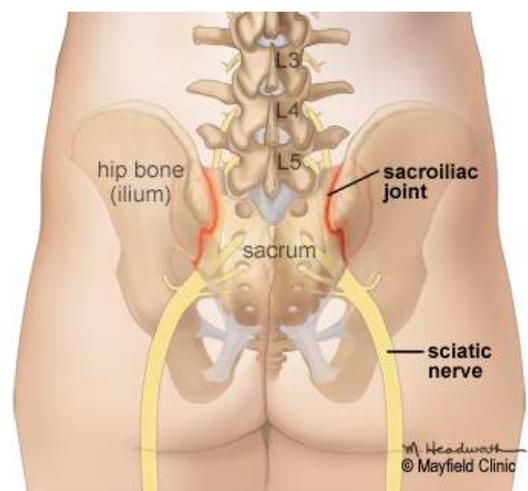
<https://www.healthline.com/health/pregnancy/sciatica-pain-stretches#treatments>

Sacroiliac joint pain

The two sacroiliac joints (SIJs) are at the back of the pelvis where the large hip bones join the sacrum. Held together by strong ligaments (like strong elastic), these joints become more lax during pregnancy to make the joints mobile so that they can stretch open to make more room for the baby to pass through during birth. This extra mobility makes the joints less strong so they are vulnerable to injury and imbalance, and movement of the joints may result in inflammation which causes pain. This is known as sacroiliac joint pain or pelvic girdle pain.

It may feel like a dull ache or sharp pain in the lower back, in one or both buttocks or hips. There may be pain at the front of the pelvis. *It may shoot down the leg and feel like sciatica.* It usually increases as pregnancy progresses and certain movements make the pain worse such as turning over in bed, walking, and standing from a sitting position.

Never push through pain and always cease movements which cause discomfort. It is important to have this condition diagnosed by a professional who can advise you on specific management for your situation.



Treatment and Exercise

- * Physiotherapy, chiropractic, osteopathy, acupuncture, massage, modified pregnancy yoga.
- * Having toned pelvic floor muscles will help to support your SIJs as long as you're doing them correctly. Doing them incorrectly, or having weak or tight pelvic floor muscles can contribute to the pain, so check with your women's health physiotherapist who'll ensure that you're doing the correct exercise for your muscles.
- * Always brace tummy and pelvic floor as you move about, lift, twist, sit or lie down, stand up or roll over in bed to protect your pelvic joints. Learn how at pregnancy yoga or physiotherapist.
- * Pelvic support belt or Recovery Shorts if recommended by physiotherapist.
- * Swim freestyle or exercise in water but take care not to take legs apart as in breaststroke.
- * Modified yoga poses as show below.

Avoid

Any activities which cause pain.

Bending and twisting at the same time.

Prolonged sitting including car journeys.

Using stairs when possible.

Slouching on the couch or soft chairs.

Crossing your legs.

Breaststroke with frog kicks.

Holding older children on one hip.

Opening legs to get in and out of car: instead sit down on a plastic bag with both legs out of the car, then keep both legs together as you swing them in.

Self-help

Vary between sitting, standing, walking, and lying down; do not keep to one position for more than about 30 minutes.

Walk slowly and smoothly and wear flat, soft shoes to prevent jarring when you walk.

When standing keep feet parallel, hips level and avoid standing on one leg more than the other.

When sitting, keep your hips level and your feet flat on the floor.

When seated use a small bolster cushion or a rolled up towel behind your lower back.

Rest lying on side with affected leg uppermost, with a pillow between the knees.



Avoid heavy lifting. When you lift light objects, always bend from your knees and keep back straight.

Always roll to your side and use your arms to push yourself up, or to lower yourself to lie down.

Ensure you get enough rest and don't overdo things - listen to your body and stop doing whatever is causing your pain.

Use a heat pack, or apply ice pack to the painful area for 10-15 minutes.



Yoga Cautions

- * Always keep hips at the same level rather than one higher than the other.
- * When sitting on the floor sit cross legged or sit on your heels.
- * ALWAYS sit on a blanket, bolster or block so that your lower back doesn't round/ curve backwards. Maintain a small lower back inward curve to support the s.i. joints.

Do not bend forward at the hips if it causes your lower back to round. Don't take legs too wide apart; stop if you feel any pain.



NO



NO



NO



NO

- * Using a yoga belt around your hips may support your SIJs.
- * Never engage in a posture that doesn't feel right for you or your body.

In cobbler pose or crossed legs:

- * sit on a blanket/bolster to sit higher
- * place pillows under knees to relax the hips
- * don't bend forward



PREGNANCY YOGA & BIRTH WISDOM

Love your pregnancy. Learn how to be comfortable with the changes of pregnancy. You deserve to feel great.

Tuesday evenings 6 - 7.30pm

Saturday mornings 9.30 - 11am



"I always feel so supported and nurtured after your beautiful class and the focus on lower back was exactly what I needed on Saturday as my lower back has been killing me." Elodie

Yoga poses to relieve and strengthen the sacroiliac joints



Cat stretch *only moving upper back*

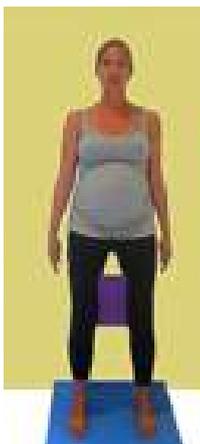
Use a block or pillow between knees to keep hips level. Only move your upper back, keeping your pelvis and hips still. Exhale and push hands into floor, rounding your upper spine toward ceiling and head hanging forward, drawing tummy and pelvic floor in, then inhale and flatten spine, draw shoulders down away from ears.

Rpt 10 times.



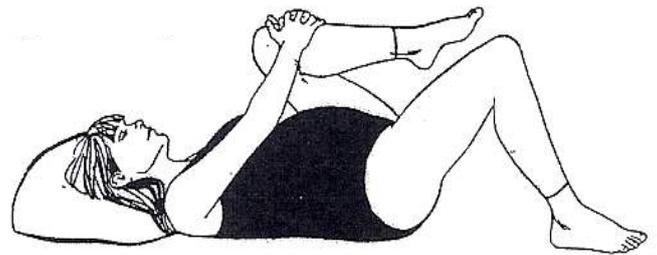
Down face dog - start on all 4's then press sitting bones toward ceiling. Keep weight evenly distributed between hands and feet. If your lower back rounds, bend your knees.

If this is too strong, and in third trimester, rest hands on chair or wall. If lower back rounds, bend your knees.



Chair pose/wall squat - back against wall, feet parallel, hip width apart and away from the wall, block between knees, bend knees and sink down wall, gently squeeze block with thighs, hold and breathe.

Knee to chest - lie on back if comfortable, only in early pregnancy. Keep one leg on floor, bend other knee into chest (bring knee to outside of belly) and hold for 5 breaths. You may like to hold the irritated side for longer if it provides relief. Place a blanket under your torso and head to raise them if this helps. Not suitable for Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction.



Web references

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symphysis_pubis_dysfunction

<http://www.babycenter.com.au/pregnancy/antenatalhealth/physicalhealth/pelvicpain/>

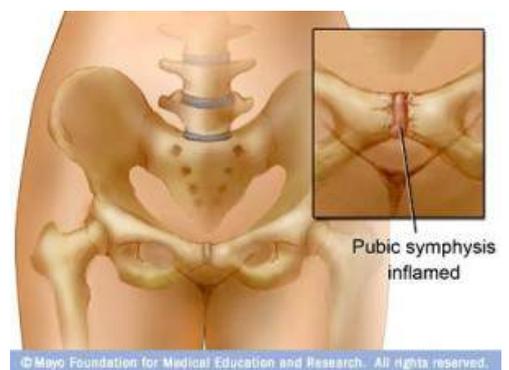
Images: liveyogalife.com yoga.lovetoknow.com yogajanda.com bellamama.co.nz
birthbliss.wordpress.com

Pubic joint pain or Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction (SPD)

At the front of the pelvis, the ligaments joining the two pubic bones together soften and stretch during pregnancy, sometimes causing inflammation and pain. This is known as Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction (SPD). For most women this reverses after the birth.

Pain is usually felt in the pubic area and groin, and may radiate to the inner thighs. There may be grinding or clicking sensations in the pubic area. Pain may be made worse by parting legs, walking, going up or down stairs or moving around in bed. Discomfort often continues after changing position such as walking after sitting, or on getting out of bed.

Never push through pain and always cease movements which cause discomfort. It is important to have this condition diagnosed by a professional who can advise you on specific management for your situation.



Treatment and Exercise

- * Physiotherapy, chiropractic, osteopathy, acupuncture, massage, modified pregnancy yoga.
- * Having toned pelvic floor muscles will help to support your SIJs as long as you're doing them correctly. Doing them incorrectly, or having weak or tight pelvic floor muscles can contribute to the pain, so check with your women's health physiotherapist who'll ensure that you're doing the correct exercise for your muscles.
- * Always brace tummy and pelvic floor as you move about, lift, twist, sit or lie down, stand up or roll over in bed to protect your pelvic joints. Learn how at pregnancy yoga or physiotherapist.
- * Wear a pelvic support belt or Recovery Shorts if recommended by physiotherapist.
- * Exercise in water but do not kick with frog legs as in breaststroke.

Avoid

Taking legs apart or asymmetrical positions

Any yoga poses or activities which cause pain

Standing on one leg

Bike riding

Crossing legs

High heels

Prolonged standing

Squatting

Heavy lifting or pushing (particularly shopping trolley, pram, vacuum cleaner)

Slouching on the couch or soft chairs

Stairs if possible

All stretching or exercising with legs apart or asymmetrical poses including lunges and squats
i.e. NO squats, lunges, warrior pose, triangle pose, cobbler pose



NO



NO



NO

Self-help

- Draw in tummy and pelvic floor when moving about or exercising
- Keep hips level when exercising, lifting and sitting
- Glue knees together when turning over in bed and getting in and out of car
- Roll to side and use arms to push up when getting out of bed
- Place pillow between knees when lying down
- Take small steps when walking
- Sit down to put your pants and shoes on and take them off
- Use stairs one step at a time
- Wear well cushioned flat shoes

Labour and birth

Make sure anyone attending you is aware that you have SPD. Your midwife should measure how far you can comfortably widen your legs at the onset of labour and ensure that you don't exceed this.

Avoid epidural which will remove pain and allow you to open your legs wider than your comfort point, causing damage to the ligaments.

Avoid lying back, semi-sitting or stirrups to give birth as these positions place undue pressure on the pubic joint and can cause injury.

Use upright positions, lie on your side or on all fours, don't open legs wider than comfort allows, labour and give birth in water if possible.

Avoid strain for the first month after birth as this time is crucial for recovery.

Helpful yoga poses to relieve and strengthen the Symphysis pubis (pubic joint)



Cat stretch - use a block or pillow between knees to keep hips level. Exhale and push hands into floor, tuck tail under if comfortable, rounding your spine toward ceiling and head hanging forward, drawing tummy and pelvic floor in, then inhale and return to neutral spine, draw shoulders down away from ears. Repeat 10 times.

Seated inner thigh strengthener - feet flat on floor, block between knees. Squeeze thighs into block, hold for 5 breaths then slowly release. Repeat 5 times.



Down face dog - start on all 4's then press sitting bones toward ceiling. Keep weight evenly distributed between hands and feet.

If your lower back rounds, bend your knees.

If this is too strong, and in third trimester, rest hands on chair or wall. If lower back rounds, bend your knees.

Chair pose/wall squat - back against wall, feet parallel, hip width apart and away from the wall, block between thighs, bend knees and sink down wall, hold and breathe, gently squeezing the block.



Sitting in supported virasana - sitting on block with knees tucked under thighs. This position is better than crossed legs to do upper body stretches.

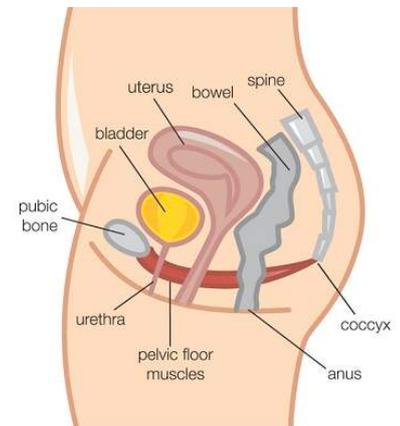
Side lying relaxation pose or sleeping with pillow between knees



Tailbone pain

One of the most common aches in pregnancy. Hormones relax and stretch your pelvic floor, which attaches to your tailbone (coccyx). Constipation can contribute to pain, as can incorrect posture, a weak or tight pelvic floor or imbalanced pelvis.

As well as discomfort, this can affect the position of baby in your pelvis and may complicate labour, so if self-help doesn't ease the pain see a health professional for diagnosis and care.



Self-help

Rest on your left side with pillow between your knees to promote good circulation of blood to and from baby and your body.

Change positions often – don't sit or stand for long periods of time without moving.

Avoid excess weight gain.

Wear a maternity belt if prescribed by a health professional.

Use excellent posture when sitting, standing and lying down. Don't slump or sit on your tailbone.

Avoid high heels or uncomfortable shoes.

Apply a hot pack to your lower back.

Avoid heavy lifting.

Encourage regular bowel movements – lots of water, fruit, veggies and fibre.

<https://www.braceability.com/blogs/articles/13-fixes-for-pregnancy-tailbone-pain>

Stretches to ease pain

Cat pose on hands and knees or standing

Downward dog

Bridge if belly's not too big or you feel sick or faint

Child pose

<https://www.healthline.com/health/pregnancy/tailbone-pain#5>

Recommended for all pregnant women (and postnatal women too!)

A visit to a women's health / pelvic floor physiotherapist or osteopath is an excellent investment during pregnancy and after birth. It will bring you comfort, ease aches and pains, and ensure that you're in alignment to have an easier birth and faster recovery.

Alice Mackenzie, Alchemy in Motion, Noosa Junction 5441 4764

Rebecca Steele, Hinteractive Physio, Cooroy 5442 5556

Helen Swift, Noosa Sports & Spinal Physiotherapy, Noosaville 5449 0024

Megan Smart, Osteopath, Bodywise Noosa 0488 269 417

Sunshine Coast University Hospital physiotherapy department 5202 0000