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Intermediate Care and Community Directorate

Pelvic Girdle Pain in Pregnancy

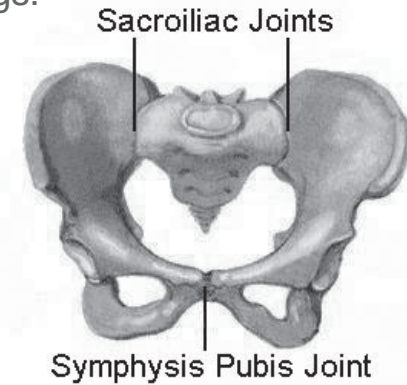


References

Pregnancy-related Pelvic Girdle Pain (PGP) for Health Professionals. Association of Chartered Physiotherapists in Women's Health, 2011.

What is pelvic girdle pain (PGP)?

PGP describes pain from 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 pain may be low in your back, hips, buttock, groin or pubic bone. You may have pain in just one place or all around your pelvis. Sometimes you may have pain down one or both legs.



What are the symptoms of PGP?

- Difficulty walking.
- Pain when standing on one leg.
- Pain/difficulty moving your legs apart.
- Difficulty lying in some positions.
- Pain during normal activities of daily living.
- Clicking or grinding in pelvic area.

What causes PGP?

- The pelvic girdle joints may move unevenly.
- Changes in the activity of the muscles of your tummy, pelvic girdle, hip and pelvic floor can lead to the pelvic girdle becoming less stable and therefore painful.
- A change in posture as your bump grows can change how the spine works.
- A small number of women can have pain caused by hormones.
- A previous accident or fall that has damaged your pelvis

Can I still have a normal labour?

Most women with PGP can have a normal vaginal birth. Advise your Midwife that you have PGP. During labour use gravity to help the baby move downwards by staying as upright as possible: -

- Kneeling
- On all fours
- Standing

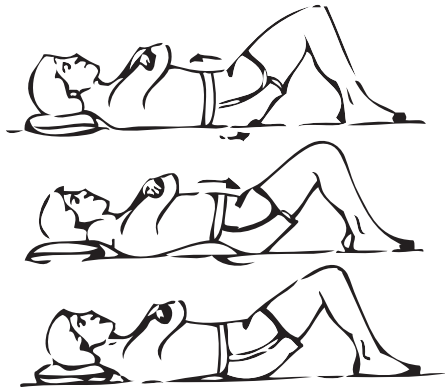
Try to avoid lying on your back or sitting propped up on the bed as these positions reduce the pelvic opening and may slow labour. Using a birthing stool or squatting may be less well tolerated if you have PGP. Being in water may help you to change positions more easily. You may be able to lie on your side for internal examinations.



What if the PGP continues after baby is delivered?

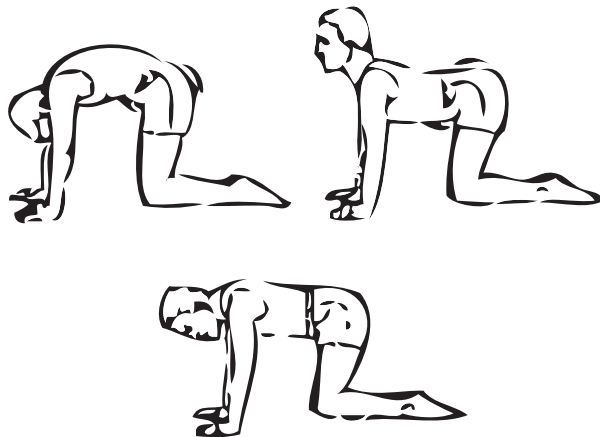
Most women find the pain resolves soon after birth. However if this is not the case within the first few weeks, please ask your Midwife or GP to refer you into the Women's Health physiotherapy team.

3. Lying



Squeeze the bottom muscles and flatten you back down. Hold for a few seconds and release

4. Hands and knees



Squeeze your abdominal and bottom muscles to tuck your tailbone under and hunch your back upwards. Then return to a flat back position.

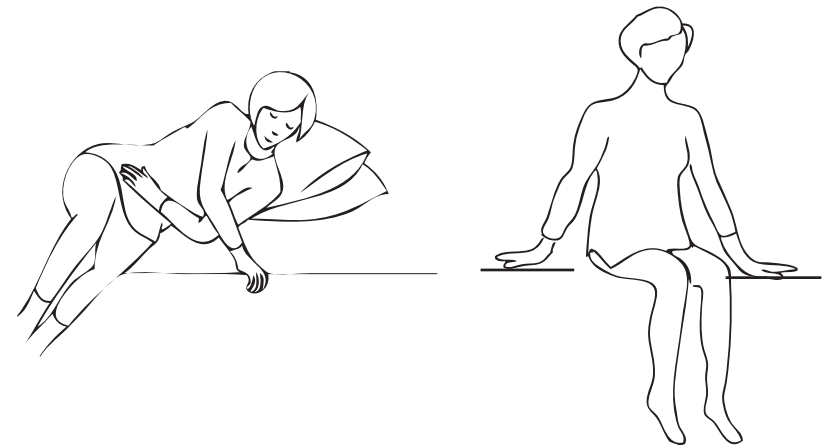
Practice at least 10 of these 2-3 times a day.

What can I do to help pelvic girdle pain?

1. Avoiding any activity where you are taking one leg away from another.

These things include:

- **Getting in and out of bed** – Try to turn onto your side with your knees bent and use your arms to push you up into sitting.



- **Turning in bed** – keep your knees together and squeeze buttocks and tummy or have a pillow between your knees when turning. Alternatively try turning with the bump down towards the bed
- **Getting in and out of a car** – try to swivel out of a car with your knees together. Try sitting on a plastic bag whilst getting in and out in order to make it easier to swivel.

- **Swimming** – swimming is excellent during pregnancy but breast stroke legs can often increase your pain. Try doing backstroke or front crawl instead, or use round breaststroke arms with kicking front crawl legs.
 - **Sexual intercourse** – Try different positions e.g. lying on your side or kneeling on all fours.
2. **Crossing legs should be avoided when you have pelvic girdle pain.**

Ask others to remind you when they notice you doing it.

3. **Try to keep your weight equally over both legs.**

Activities that often involve putting more of your weight on one side are:

- **Dressing** – sit down to get dressed and undressed. Wear flat supportive shoes.
- **Going up and downstairs** – go upstairs one leg at a time with the most pain free leg first and the other leg joining it on the step. Go downstairs with the most painful leg first, then the other leg joining it. Try and limit the amount of times you have to go up/down stairs.

Pelvic Tilt

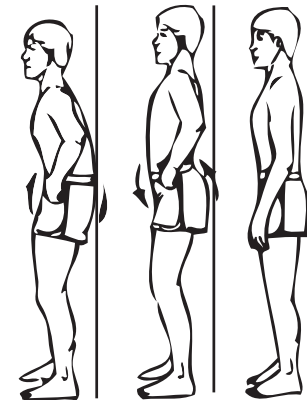
The pelvic tilt can be done in different positions

1. Sitting



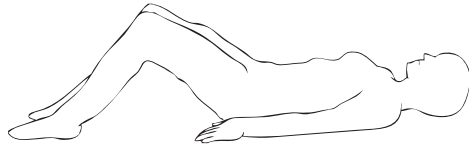
Start sat up tall and then tilt your pelvis as if you are trying to curl your tail bone down into the chair. Return to the starting position.

2. Standing



Stand against a wall. Flatten your back against the wall by squeezing the buttocks and pulling the stomach in.

Deep abdominal muscle exercise



This exercise strengthens the muscles that help to stabilize your back and pelvis. You should do this exercise in a position that you find comfortable, initially this may be on your back with your knees bent up or on your side.

1. Let your tummy sag. Breathe gently.
2. When you breathe out draw in your lower tummy as if you are trying to zip up a tight pair of jeans. You should be relaxed from above your belly button and be able to breathe normally.
3. Hold the contraction for 3 breaths in and out and repeat 4-5 times (or for as long as you can!). Practice 2-3 times a day.
4. When you get better at this start to use the muscle in different positions and during different activities e.g. as you stand up, or lift or turn over in bed.

- **Walking** – Remain active within the limits of your pain. Listen to your body to guide how far you can walk.
- **Carrying** – Avoid carrying anything in one hand and avoid carrying a toddler on one hip. Avoid lifting heavy weights e.g. shopping bags, wet washing, vacuum cleaners and toddlers.
- Household chores – ask for and accept help from partner, friends and relatives.
- 4. **Avoid getting into asymmetrical positions.**

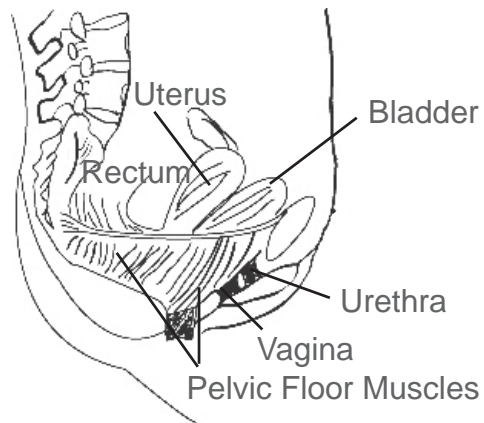
This may happen when you are:

- **Standing** – avoid standing on one leg and avoid standing for long periods.
- **Sitting** – avoid crossing your legs, sitting on the floor, sitting twisted and sitting for long periods.
- **Sleeping** – sleep in a comfortable position e.g. lie on your side with a pillow between your legs.

Exercises

Exercises will help to retrain and strengthen the muscles around your back and pelvis, improving the stability of the pelvic girdle.

Pelvic floor exercises



Your pelvic floor muscles stabilise your pelvic joints, and support your pelvic organs preventing prolapses, they also wrap around your bladder and bowel to prevent incontinence. During pregnancy they are stretched and weakened putting you at risk of future problems.

Slow Exercises

Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself passing wind and at the same time stop the flow of urine. You should feel a squeeze and lift from around your front and back passage. It is quite a gentle exercise and you should not be pulling in your buttocks or tummy muscles.

Hold the contraction for as long as you can and repeat until your muscles are tiring. To strengthen the muscle further you need to build up the endurance of the muscle so that it works harder and longer.

Fast Exercises

Tighten and relax the muscles quickly. This will help the muscle to stop urine leaking when you laugh, cough or sneeze.

How often and how many?

Build up to doing 10 slow exercises and 10 fast exercises. Do these 4 times a day.