

When pregnancy is a pain in the bum



Common aches and pains in pregnancy

and what you can do about them

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Wincing as you roll over in bed. Grimacing as you attempt to get up from the couch or out of the car. Pain with walking. Avoiding taking the stairs. Losing sleep because you just can't get comfortable. Sound familiar?

Pregnancy can be a truly amazing experience. Unfortunately, for some mums, it can bring with it aches and pains that make the experience less comfortable and enjoyable. One of the most common complaints of pregnancy is lower back pain or pelvic pain, which can literally be a pain in the bum! There can be many reasons for this, but you usually

have a combination of hormones, weight gain, and postural changes to thank.

Relaxin, a pregnancy hormone, causes supporting ligaments to loosen, especially around the pelvis. This plays an important role in preparing the body for birth, but can result in less joint stability, increasing the chance of injury.

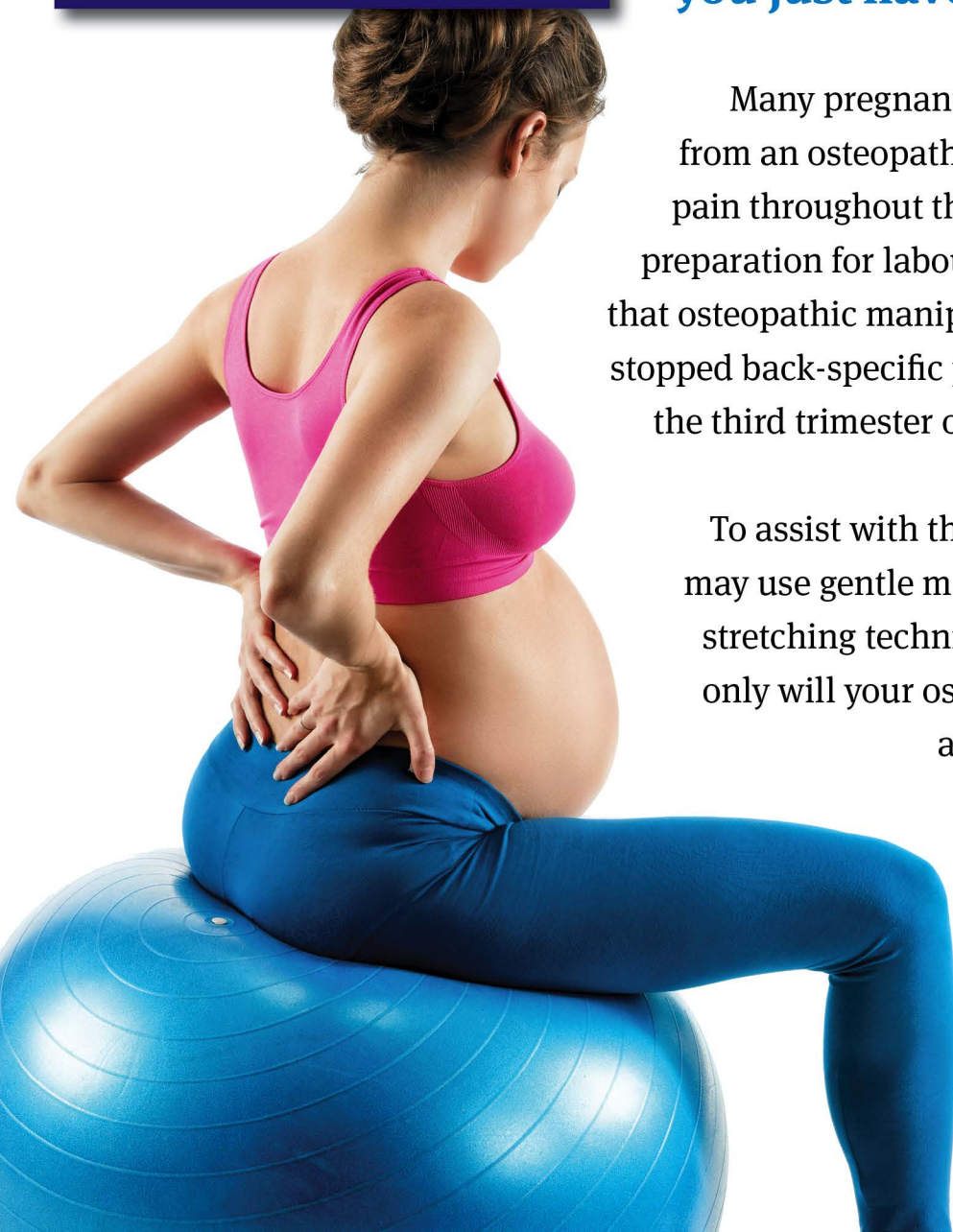
Low back pain and pelvic pain are common complaints in pregnancy, with up to 60% of women experiencing back pain

Pregnancy puts a lot of strain on the body as it goes through major changes to accommodate a growing baby. As the pregnancy progresses, the extra weight creates a shift in the body's centre of gravity, pulling the body off balance. As a result, lower back pain and pelvic pain are two of the most common complaints in pregnancy, with up to 60% of women experiencing back pain¹. A significant percentage of women also continue to experience symptoms postpartum.

The good news is that, while pain and discomfort in pregnancy may be common, it is not inevitable and it isn't something you just have to put up with.

Many pregnant women find that treatment from an osteopath is very helpful for reducing pain throughout their pregnancy and in preparation for labour. A 2010 study showed that osteopathic manipulative treatment slowed or stopped back-specific problems that can occur during the third trimester of pregnancy².

To assist with these problems, osteopaths may use gentle massage, joint articulation, or stretching techniques during treatment. Not only will your osteopath treat the symptoms and pains of pregnancy, they can also offer advice about managing them using self-help techniques such as specific stretches and strengthening or mobility exercises.





The solution to pregnancy-related lower back or pelvic pain is often surprisingly simple, with targeted exercises, and posture and movement advice that can significantly reduce symptoms or eliminate them all together.

One of the most useful tips for rolling over in bed is the “knee squeeze.” Squeeze your knees together and keep them together as you shift your bottom to the side and then roll over. It’s the pregnant

mama’s version of a three-point turn and it works wonderfully well to keep your pelvis and spine in alignment, relieving the pain of rolling in bed.

Once the baby is born, a few simple things can make all the difference in avoiding postpartum back pain.

Avoid slouching, as this puts extra mechanical stress on the lower back. Instead, use a pillow for support. When placing the baby in the cot, try to lean in and not over, using the cot frame to support your lower body, reducing the bending strain on your back. And if you have to lift the baby in the car seat, bend your knees when you

go to lift it rather than bending over at the waist. Tuck your elbow in close to your body while using the carry handle, which will reduce the strain on your neck, shoulder, and back.

For those not already in the know, osteopathy is a form of drug-free, manual healthcare that focuses on total body health by recognising the important link between the structure of the body and the way it functions.

Osteopaths encourage individuals to proactively prevent injuries and ailments, which in the long term leads to better overall health and wellbeing. 💧

Kirsten Hannan is an Australian trained and registered osteopath who has over 15 years of clinical practice experience.



Lifting the car seat

- *Turn the car seat so your baby is facing you.*
- *Bend at your hips and knees into a squat position.*
- *Avoid bending at the waist with legs straight.*
- *Loop your arm through the car seat handle, resting it in the crook of your elbow.*
- *Keeping the seat close to you, use your legs to lift.*
- *Support the underside of the car seat with your other arm and carry it either nestled into your waist or in front of your body.*

1 Wang, S.-M., Dezinno, P., Maranets, I., Berman, M., Caldwell-Andrews, A., & Kain, Z. (2004). Low Back Pain During Pregnancy: Prevalence, Risk Factors, and Outcomes. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 65-70.

2 Licciardone, J., Buchanan, S., Hensel, K., King, H., Fulda, K., & Stoll, S. (2010). Osteopathic manipulative treatment of back pain and related symptoms during pregnancy: a randomized controlled trial. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 43.

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