



Oh, my aching back!

Pregnancy can be a joyous time, but it can also be a pain in the... back. BY LISA EVANS

AVOID THESE ACTIVITIES TO HELP PREVENT BACK PAIN:

- **Lifting heavy objects.** Practise good posture when picking up any object by bending at the knees and lifting with your legs rather than your back. Avoid picking up things that weigh more than a few pounds.
- **Wearing high heels.** Your centre of gravity is already affected by your growing belly. Adding heels to the mix can throw off your balance and cause strain on your back. Invest in a pair of shoes with low heels and good arch support.
- **Sleeping on your back.** Sleep on your side with knees bent and place a pillow between them. Elevating your knees takes the pressure off the lower back.

Are you having a baby?

Pick up a copy of Expecting magazine at your doctor's office, or read more at ParentsCanada.com/pregnancy

Lacy Sletten's back pain started five months into her pregnancy and progressively worsened. "I tried everything from pillows to warm baths. I felt there wasn't a whole lot I could do. It just seemed common," she says. As your belly grows, your centre of gravity shifts forward. "With your belly protruding, you naturally lean your head backwards so you don't fall forward," says Dr. Maya Pande, chiropractor and owner of Pande Family Wellness Centre in Toronto. This increases the curvature of the lower back and can strain the muscles, resulting in discomfort. Try these techniques to reduce back pain.

At Home

PRACTISE GOOD POSTURE

- Hold your chest high.
- Keep the shoulders back and relaxed.
- Use a wider stance to provide support.
- Choose a chair with support or place a small pillow behind your lower back.

GENTLE STRETCHING This will counteract the backward curvature of the spine, says Dr. Pande. Try straddling a sturdy dining chair. Lean forward over the back of the chair to create a forward curve in your spine. Or try a cat stretch – get on all fours and round your back towards the ceiling while gazing at your belly.

HEAT Heat can open up the blood vessels, allowing oxygen to travel to the muscle fibres. Apply a warm towel, warm water bottle or heating pad set to a low setting on your back, but avoid adding any heat to the belly.

With a Specialist

Consult your healthcare provider to make sure there are no contraindications for these alternative therapies and to maintain an openness and trust in your prenatal care plan.

CHIROPRACTIC TREATMENT The hormone relaxin is released during pregnancy to loosen up ligaments and open the pelvis. "Relaxin can cause the pelvis to go out of alignment, which puts pressure on the nerves," says Dr. Pande. A chiropractic adjustment can help balance out the pelvis and reduce discomfort. If your healthcare provider gives the OK, look for a chiropractor with experience treating pregnant women.

ACUPUNCTURE Chinese medical practitioner Gosia Pacyna says acupuncture can help relieve pregnancy back pain, but recommends finding an acupuncturist that has extra training in treating pregnancy. "There are many points which we use with great success with back pain but that we cannot do during pregnancy at any stage," says Gosia. Rather than using needles on the back, Gosia uses distance points located on the legs, ears and hands. ○