

# The Wellness Express™



Jump on the train to good health

Issue 3, August 2011

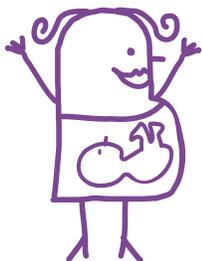
## Pregnancy and Low Back Pain

Presented by: Creative Healing

Pregnancy is a unique and challenging condition – for both the female who is pregnant and for her chiropractor! The effects of major hormonal shifts, an incredibly rapid weight gain (and then loss), and the stress associated with being a new mother all combine to make pregnancy one of the most common causes of low back pain.

### The Stats

Low back pain statistics for pregnant females are quite alarming. For the general population, it is estimated that approximately 70-85% of us will experience at least one bout of acute low back pain in our lives.<sup>1</sup> In the pregnant female population, the rate is 50-80% during a 9-month window!<sup>2</sup> And for those women who experienced back pain during pregnancy, over 60% of these women described the pain as at least moderately severe, and close to 10% said the pain was “completely disabling.”<sup>3</sup>



+ 20-40 pounds

### The Main Cause of Pain

Since low back pain often occurs in the later stages of pregnancy, experts suggest that the main cause of this type of pain in the pregnant population can be attributed to the shift in the center of gravity caused by the growing fetus and the hormonal changes that prepare the mother’s body for delivery of the baby.

It is normal for pregnant women to gain as much as 20-40 pounds during gestation.<sup>4</sup> As the abdomen of a pregnant female grows, postural demands on the body increase. Because of the forward shift in the center of gravity, the pelvis has a tendency to tilt forward, and the lumbar curve also increases. This places greater physical loads on the joints, muscles and ligaments where the lower back and pelvis meet. The two large sacroiliac (SI) joints on either side of the pelvis bear most of this load. With the stress these two joints experience in the later trimesters, it is not surprising the main cause of low back pain in these patients is sacroiliac dysfunction and subluxation!<sup>5</sup>

### Exercise of the Week

**Pelvic Stabilization in Reverse Bridge Position with Hamstring Curls**

**Difficulty:** Easy to Moderate

*(Consult your Chiropractor before starting this or any other exercise)*

**Start:** Lie on back, lower legs resting on ball, knees straight. Hands can rest on hips with elbows touching floor. Press down into ball with legs, lifting hips until entire body is in straight position, feet to shoulders. Stabilize with stomach tucked in and hold.

**Exercise:** Roll ball toward buttocks using both feet. As ball comes closer to buttocks, hips should keep still. Curl legs to 90 degrees and hold for 2 counts. Return to start position; maintain a tight abdomen throughout. Repeat 5-10 times.



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## The Characteristics of the Pain

The pain caused by sacroiliac strain is usually localized to the low back. It can be sharp and stabbing, or achy and dull. It can affect one side, or both sides, and often any weight-bearing activities can aggravate the pain. Although it is typically felt directly over the joints, the pain can also radiate into the buttocks or down the back of the leg, mimicking sciatica. Sacroiliac pain can be differentiated from sciatic nerve pain due to the fact that sacroiliac joint irritation usually does not extend past the knee. This is an important point to consider because pregnant women can also experience true bouts of sciatica caused by lumbar disc herniation or other causes of nerve irritation.

## The Challenge

Because of the danger to the fetus, diagnostic imaging of a pregnant female's spine is not recommended. Therefore, most of the tests needed to diagnose the cause of pain in a pregnant patient are limited to pattern recognition, orthopedic tests, and direct palpation of the tissues.

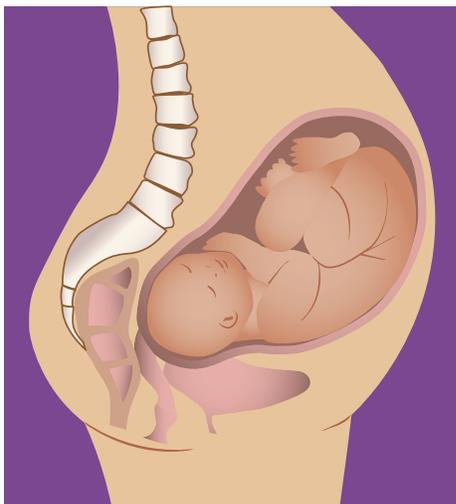
## The Solution to Pain? Your Chiropractor!

Fortunately for pregnant women everywhere, chiropractic care is ideally suited for a pregnant patient.

One report indicated that 84% of the women who received spinal manipulative therapy during pregnancy were relieved of back pain!<sup>6</sup>

In a more recent study, 16 of 17 women treated for back pain during pregnancy received clinically significant relief within an *average of less than 2 visits* to their chiropractor. No adverse effects were reported by any of the women in the study.<sup>7</sup>

Researchers in New York followed a group of 23 pregnant patients who visited their doctors for back pain and found that almost 50% of the patients had sacroiliac joint pain and SI joint subluxations. Of the 11 women who received adjustments to their pelvis to correct for these subluxations, 10 out of 11 reported relief from pain!<sup>8</sup>



Studies show chiropractic to be a very safe and effective treatment option for low back pain. However, in the rare case that adjustments alone do not help, other treatment options may include: postural exercise, rest, medication, or belts and bracing.<sup>4</sup>

## Quote to Inspire

*"When I was pregnant, I felt filled with life, and I felt really happy. I ate well, and I slept well. I felt much more useful than I'd ever felt before."*  
- Suzanne Vega

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