

Strong To Your Pregnant Core - Caring For Your Posture, Abs & Back During Pregnancy.

'Heavy bump, achy upper back, sore lower back, reduced mobility, love handles...'
Understanding a little about how your body works and learning a few simple exercises and stretches can help you avoid these common complaints of pregnancy!

10 Reasons To Want Strong Abs!

- 1.) Support a growing bump
- 2.) Minimize the sideways spread
- 3.) Maintain a healthy posture
- 4.) Assist with turning in bed
- 5.) Lessen pressure on the pelvic floor
- 6.) Prevent lower back pain
- 7.) Pushing strength for birth
- 8.) Reduce physical stress of caesarian birth
- 9.) Get back in shape faster after birth
- 10.) Avoid injury when lifting as a new mum

Most women do not train the abdominal and back muscles at all whilst pregnant. The non-exerciser has probably never trained them and the experienced exerciser often does not know how to train them safely. Yet, they are perhaps the most important muscles to look after during pregnancy and the post birth period.

Individually and collectively, the rectus abdominals ('6 pack'), obliques (side muscles), transverse abdominals (core stabilizers) and erector spinae (lower back), provide vital support for the pregnant woman and new mother.

Strong and flexible rectus abdominals can expand around a growing bump whilst still giving support. They are also better able to 'shrink' back following the birth, especially if there has been some separation.

The oblique muscles provide support from the side making it easier to turn in bed. They also keep the sides toned. Viewed from the back you may not even look as though you are pregnant!

If your core stabilizers are strong the movement to reach out and catch a ball is preceded by a tightening of these muscles around the spine. The more reactive these muscles are the more efficient support they provide for the back in daily life. Think of all the lifting involved with being a new mum – baby, stroller, capsule...

The erector spinae needs to be strong, flexible and in balance with the opposing abdominal muscles to complete the support structure.

You can train all these muscles safely and effectively until birth with daily 'bumpshifts' and 'supermans'. Start with 5 each side and gradually increase.

Back Care at Work

Many of the physical changes of pregnancy affect the spine. Body weight increases, the growing belly shifts weight forward, enlarged breasts create rounded shoulders, pelvic tilt causes leg muscles to tighten and pull on the lower back and joint laxity loosens the spine and pelvis. These changes alter posture and the body's centre of gravity which the spine has to accommodate. The result is an increased load or pressure on the upper and lower back and muscle discomfort. Workplace conditions such as sitting or standing for long periods and high use of computers and phones, place subtle and constant stress on the back which can heighten this negative effect further.

Tips For Preventing Back Pain At Work

- 1.) Avoid standing still for long periods, especially in high heels
- 2.) Remember 2:15 rule – get up and walk around for 2 minutes in every 15 minutes
- 3.) Change chairs/position frequently or sit on a 'fitball' for part of the day
- 4.) Try to keep a good posture and not let yourself slouch
- 5.) Stretch shoulders throughout the day by circling them up, back and down
- 6.) Stretch upper back daily – kneel with knees apart, lean forward, reach hands out on floor, let the chest sag down
- 7.) Stretch leg muscles daily - hamstrings – seated, stretch one leg out in front, hands on bent knee, lean forward, gluteals – place one ankle on other knee keeping lifted knee wide, lean slightly forward
- 8.) Stretch lower back daily – on hands and knees, slowly flatten back, then curl up into an arch tilting hips forward

I thought these 3 bits of info could be pull out boxes.

Bumpshifts

Lie on side resting on one elbow, place other hand on side of 'bump' nearest floor. **Level 1** - slowly lift hip up and down. **Level 2** - slowly lift whole body up and down. Can you feel your bump move?

Supermans

On hands and knees, slowly lift and straighten opposite arm and leg, lower and repeat with other arm and leg. Imagine a tray of drinks on your lower back that you must not spill!

Roll Away Pelvic Pain

Ease ligament pain in the pelvis by sitting on a 'fitball' and drawing large slow circles with your hips.

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