

Articles by our Physical Therapists

35. Why Put Up with Back Pain During Pregnancy?

Why Put Up with Back Pain During Pregnancy?

Recently, I have come to a deeper understanding of one grueling aspect of pregnancy. My wife and I are expecting our first child this September. My wife has endured low back pain, rib pain, and sacroiliac joint pain. Most women at some point in their pregnancy will develop low back pain (LBP) or pelvic girdle pain (PGP) beginning somewhere around the 17th-19th week of their pregnancy and peak around the 24th-36th week. Some causes of LBP during pregnancy are an increase in lumbar lordosis in the lumbar spine, an increase in Relaxin, the hormone that causes laxity in the ligaments, and the stretching out of a pregnant woman's abdominal musculature. Ladies, you do not have to put up with this pain. You can maintain your function, reduce pain, and improve your quality of life during your pregnancy with aquatic therapy.

Aquatic physical therapy's benefits include a decrease in joint loading, an increase hydrostatic pressure reducing swelling, and it strengthens and stretches key muscles without placing excess demand on the musculoskeletal system as land-based exercises can do. First, when you exercise in a pool, you weigh less resulting in a lesser amount of weight on your joints. In other words, when an individual is chest deep in a pool, they are only 30% weight bearing. This drastic reduction in weight helps to decrease the pressure and load placed on the lumbar spine/pelvis. Second, the hydrostatic pressure the water creates helps excrete some of fluid that builds up during pregnancy in the lower extremities, which, in turn, can decrease some of the pressure in the legs. Third, you can increase the strength in key muscles in the back, the transversus abdominis, multifidus, and the pelvic floor musculature. When these muscles are targeted in therapy, it decreases LBP/PGP and also reduces urinary incontinence during and after pregnancy. Lastly, when pregnant women strengthen the aforementioned muscles, post-pregnancy back pain is lessened. My wife started aquatic therapy around her 30th week of pregnancy to help decrease her LBP/PGP and rib pain. Her pain since starting these sessions has decreased dramatically and she has been able to maintain a level of function that allows her to complete her daily activities without causing her more discomfort and pain. If you are currently pregnant, don't put up with the LBP or PGP. Instead, contact us at Baker Valley Physical Therapy to start your aquatic therapy sessions today.

Caleb McIlmoil, DPT

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