Ontario Chiropractic Association

# MINIMIZE PREGNANCY-RELATED BACK PAIN

You're anxiously awaiting the pitter-patter of tiny feet, but you can't paint the nursery because of back pain. You're in good company! 50 percent of pregnant women experience back pain, with 10 percent reporting severe discomfort that prevents them from carrying out their daily routines.

What causes pregnancy-related back pain? First, the average healthy weight gain during pregnancy is over 30 pounds. This extra weight places considerable stress on the back, feet, ankles and knees. As the baby grows, the core abdominal muscles become stretched and cannot stabilize your posture as efficiently as they did before.

Secondly, there are hormonal changes. In the third trimester, levels of a hormone called "relaxin" increase ten times. Relaxing loosens your joints to allow the pelvis to accommodate the enlarging uterus. These loose joints force the muscles of the back and pelvis to work overtime to keep you upright and balanced.

Discomfort doesn't have to be part and parcel of pregnancy.

## Try these tips to help minimize your risk of back pain:

- Exercise can help increase muscle support for your aching back. Always consult a health care practitioner before participating in a new exercise regimen.
- Sleeping on your left side has been shown to reduce the weight of the uterus on large vessels in your abdomen, allowing for optimal blood flow to both mother and baby.
- Placing a pillow between the knees or leaning against a body pillow will take pressure off the lower back.
- Take frequent, short naps with your feet elevated.
- Wear supportive flat shoes and use a lumbar support pillow in your chair at work.

To treat and help prevent muscle strains and joint pain, consider including a chiropractor as part of your team of maternity care professionals. A maternity chiropractor can provide safe, effective, and drug-free conservative care to relieve pain by decreasing the pressure on the joints, muscles, and nerves of the spine and pelvis.

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