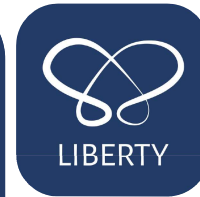


Pregnancy- related Pelvic Girdle Pain



Liberty Pelvic
Health Physio



Our website:
www.libertyphysio.co.nz

Our locations:
Merivale
Moorhouse Avenue
Cashmere

Liberty Pelvic Health Physio

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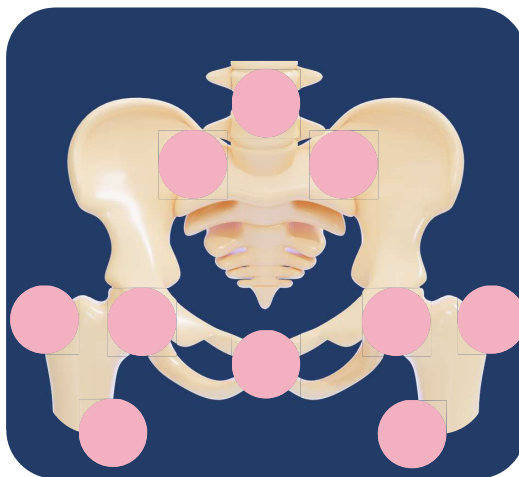


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The information in this leaflet is based on the most up-to-date research and will help you understand more about your pain and what you can do to help improve your symptoms. If you are struggling with pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain (PPGP) then please scan the QR code at the end of this leaflet to book an appointment with a Pelvic Health Physiotherapist.

What is pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain (PPGP)?



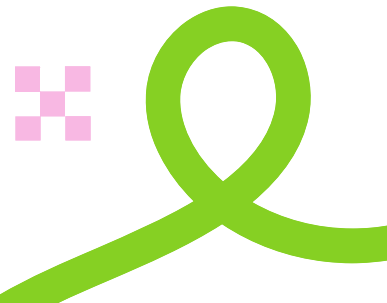
PPGP is a term used to describe how your body reacts to changes in pregnancy which results in pain around your pelvis.

As indicated in this diagram, pain can be present in lots of different areas around your pelvis and lower back.

How common is it?

25-65% of people experience pain during their pregnancy. Around 20% of people start to find their pain is affecting their daily activities.

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PPGP myths

Unfortunately there is still a lot of outdated misinformation about PPGP. But don't worry – we are here to put the record straight. Below we have highlighted some of the common myths. But these are all FALSE!

Your pelvis is
out of alignment
and unstable

PPGP will
cause harm to
your baby

PPGP
prevents a
vaginal birth

Movement will
make PPGP
worse

PPGP is
caused by
bad posture

PPGP worsens
throughout your
pregnancy

PPGP is caused
by the hormone
relaxin

Something
is
damaged

☐ TRUE
☒ FALSE

The role of relaxin



Relaxin is a hormone that is released in your pregnancy which peaks around 12 weeks. It helps to soften the tissue and ligaments around your pelvis. It used to be believed that PPGP was caused by relaxin. Research has now disproved this. Every pregnant person has relaxin but not everyone has PPGP.

*** We also know that despite these hormonal changes, your pelvis remains strong and stable throughout the whole of your pregnancy. You may experience sensations of clicking and grinding in your pelvis, but this is not a sign your pelvis is becoming unstable or out of alignment. In fact, relaxin only causes the joints in your pelvis to move an extra few millimetres; this is a totally normal process. ***

Will it improve?

With the right support from Pelvic Health Physio, PPGP can improve in pregnancy. However, if you have not seen Pelvic Health Physio and have ongoing pain, in the majority of cases, PPGP will improve after you give birth. But 10-30% people can have pain that continues for a little longer. If you are struggling with PPGP, please reach out for support from one of our expert Pelvic Health Physiotherapists. You can scan the QR code below to book an appointment.



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How to improve your pain?

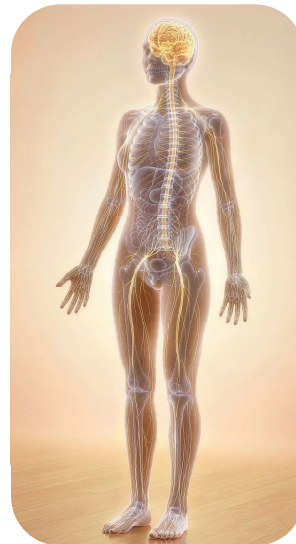
We know from research there are 3 key principles to help improve PPGP:

1. Understanding your pain (which reduces your fear)
2. Reducing tissue sensitivity – rest and recovery, comfortable movement, managing stress
3. Having a positive belief that this will improve

1. Understanding your pain

The nervous system is our body's way of communicating. The brain is the control centre and there is a massive network of receptors and nerves. These receptors sense different things like stretch, pressure, temperature, chemicals. They send this 'data' via nerves to the brain and then the brain must interpret these signals to work out if there is danger or not. If our brain decides there is danger, it will send a pain signal to the area that it is worried about to alert us that damage or injury may occur.

Pain that is experienced for a short period is helpful because it alerts us to something that may cause damage or harm (even if no damage has occurred). For example, if you stretch your finger back towards you, you will feel a stretch. But if you stretch it further your brain will send you a pain signal.



Pain does not always = damage

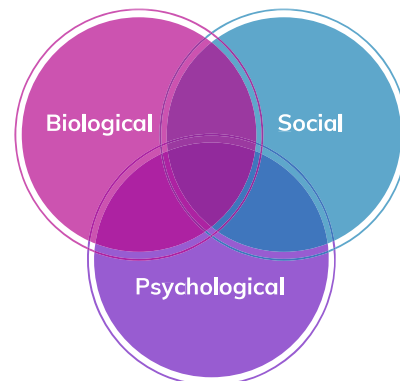
If a perceived threat continues for longer than it should, your pain system can become overprotective and hypersensitive which is no longer helpful. In the context of your pregnancy – there will be lots of normal changes that occur which result in the tissues around your pelvis becoming more sensitive. These should cause some short-term discomfort and then settle quickly; that is a helpful response. However, if your pain system continues to register there is a threat or something dangerous occurring, the pain will continue.

PPGP is less about structural damage and more about how our nervous system is reacting to changes in pregnancy.

It is likely there is not just one factor causing your nervous system to send you pain signals. There will be a combination of:

- Biological factors (physical things affecting the body)
- Psychological factors (thoughts, emotions, mental health)
- Social factors (your environment)

These factors will all influence how your nervous system reacts. For example, if someone is pregnant and they experience muscle tightness but they are managing well psychologically and don't have many social issues (e.g. they have a good support system and no financial issues) then their threshold for those normal pregnancy changes may be higher than someone who has muscular tightness, high stress levels, previous birth trauma and has just lost their job.



So, thinking about what is occurring physically is important, but it is just as important to think about psychological and social factors that may be influencing your pain journey. This can make a big difference with managing your PPGP symptoms.

2. Reducing tissue sensitivity

Manage stress

Prolonged stress in your pregnancy will cause you to be in a 'fight or flight' mode. This increases cortisol levels, increases pain and lowers mood.

Improved sleep, movement, a healthy diet, relaxation and mindfulness will help you manage stress better



Movement

Physical activity in pregnancy is so important for you and your baby, and the release of endorphins can help to lower pain levels. This graphic shows the general guidelines for exercise during an uncomplicated pregnancy. If you are a high-risk pregnancy, it's important you speak to your obstetrician about exercise precautions.

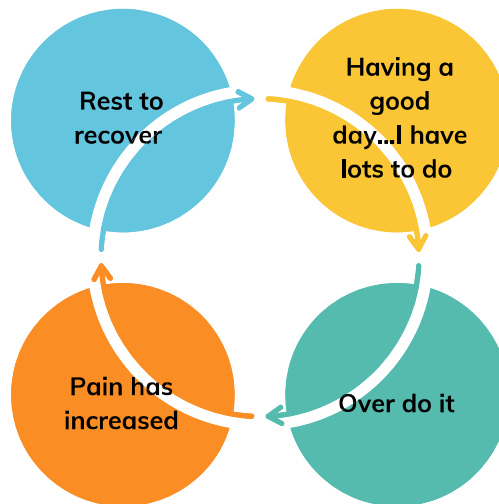
Try to find movements that you can do comfortably. Avoid exercise/movements that are really painful as this will cause your pain system to continue to be hypersensitive. Don't just push through the pain. Pelvic Health Physiotherapy can help with guidance around suitable exercises.

There are certain activities you want to avoid during your pregnancy to reduce the risk of bumping your bump. These include:

- Horse riding
- Contact sport
- Rock climbing
- Mountain biking
- Skiing/snowboarding

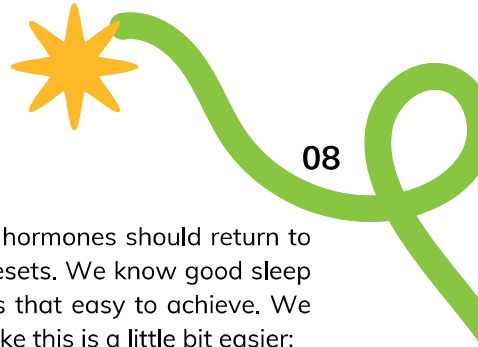
Pacing

Your muscles are working twice as hard in your pregnancy. Getting the balance between rest and activity can be key for managing PPGP. So try to avoid a boom-bust cycle (as shown below) by pacing your everyday activities and planning ahead.



Try breaking up an activity and be open to accepting help from family and friends.





Sleep

Sleep is when our body and brain rests. Our hormones should return to their normal levels and our nervous system resets. We know good sleep is important in pregnancy but it's not always that easy to achieve. We have some handy tips for you to hopefully make this a little bit easier:



- Pillows between your knees and ankles
- A rolled up towel under bump for support
- Folded up duvet on the mattress or mattress topper
- To reposition, if rolling onto your back is too painful, roll under and come onto all fours and then continue to your chosen side
- Side lying from 28 weeks (unless your obstetrician has told you otherwise) reduces the risk of stillbirth

Comfortable positions

While posture itself is not causing damage, extreme positions cause sensitive tissues to become even more sensitive. Our body likes to move, so changing your position every 20-30 minutes can help. See below for ideas:



Sitting on a gym ball



Rolled up towel to support lower back when sitting



Regular breaks



Pelvic tilting when sitting

Pain management

Other strategies that can be helpful to calm down your hypersensitive pain system could be:

- A pregnancy support belt
- Heat/ice
- Massage
- TENS from 36 weeks
- Paracetamol

3. The positive belief this will improve

Research about PPGP shows the strongest predictor of resolution is having the belief that it will go away.

Studies looking at pain have consistently shown that people who believe in their ability to manage their pain have reduced pain levels.

Feeling confident to manage PPGP is KEY! If you need support please book an appointment with a Pelvic Health Physiotherapist using this QR code.



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REFRAMING BELIEFS ABOUT PREGNANCY-RELATED PELVIC GIRDLE PAIN
Pulsifer J, Britnell S, Sim A, Adaszynski J, Dufour S

STABLE
The pelvis is resilient and adaptable to the demands of pregnancy, childbirth and childcare while maintaining its stable structure.

SAFE
Postural and pelvic structural changes are normal, safe and necessary to support the growing demands of pregnancy and childbirth.

SELF MANAGEABLE
Pain education, emotional wellbeing, sleep optimization, exercise and external supports that promote independence are the most helpful strategies to reduce pelvic girdle pain.

THE STRONGEST PREDICTOR OF RESOLUTION OF PREGNANCY-RELATED PELVIC GIRDLE PAIN (PPGP) IS HAVING THE BELIEF THAT IT WILL GO AWAY

ENGLISH

Liberty Pelvic Health Physio

Our vision:

Helping you to: Breathe well, Connect
with your body, Move with ease.



More Information:

Contact us:
03 983 0241

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