



**West Hertfordshire  
Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Trust



**A guide to...**

# **Ante-Natal Pregnancy Advice**

## ***Patient Information***



Watford General Hospital  
Hemel Hempstead Hospital  
St Albans City Hospital  
West Hertfordshire Therapy Unit

## **Pregnancy Related Pelvic Girdle Pain**

**Common painful areas:**



Around one in five pregnant women experiences discomfort in the around their pelvis during pregnancy. The discomfort is often felt over the pubic bone at the front, below your tummy, or across one side of your lower back, or both sides. This means it is really important to look after yourself to help prevent and manage pain.

More information can be found here:



## Sleeping Tips

It is recommended not to sleep flat on your back from 16 weeks as the weight of the womb can reduce blood flow to the heart and lungs. You may find it helpful to alternate from side to side throughout the night.



Using additional pillows for support or comfort may be helpful:

- Behind your back to prevent rolling onto back
- Pillow between the legs and one between feet to keep hip, knees and ankles aligned
- Pillow support under “bump” to reduce rotation of the spine

## Posture Tips

Transfer from lying to sitting on the edge of the bed by:

- Rolling onto your side in one movement (you may find having a pillow between knees beneficial)
- Use your upper limbs to push your body up into sitting as your legs move down to the floor at the same time.



You can watch this video by scanning or clicking on this QR code:

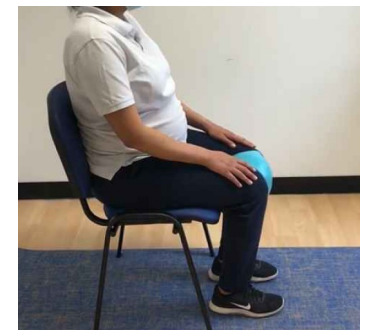


Lifting or picking up objects:

- Bring the object close to you and bend down to the object (as if you were squatting)
- Avoid breath holding.

Getting in and out of the car:

- Use a towel or something similar between knees
- Move your body as one to get out of the car by swinging your legs together.



## Pelvic Floor Exercise Advice

The pelvic floor muscles are made up of two types of muscle fibres and it is important to exercise both. The “slow” fibres are related to muscle endurance and the “fast” fibres relate to muscle strength (a pulse contraction). Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself “passing wind”, without squeezing your buttocks together.

Draw the pelvic floor muscles upwards and forwards from the back passage towards the front passage- like a ZIP!

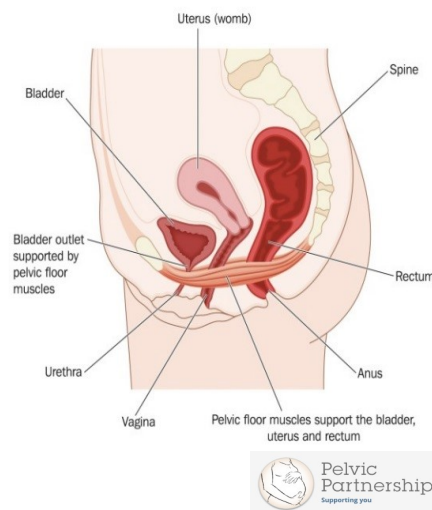
- Aim for 10 second holds x 10 repetitions (reps) to exercise your endurance muscles (tip: do this without breath holding, so count out aloud to ensure normal breathing)
- Aim for 10 repetitions to exercise your strength (pulse) muscles.

Both exercises need to be completed four times a day.

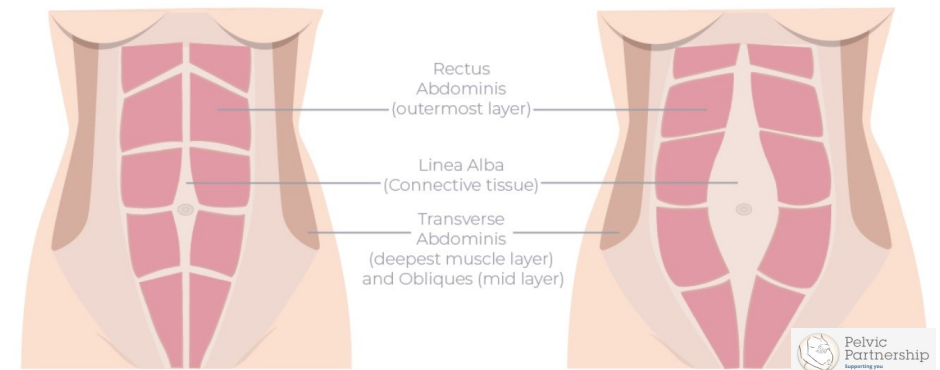
These exercises are for LIFE — try to develop a daily pelvic floor exercise routine.

If you struggle with completing these exercises please seek a women’s health physiotherapy referral from your GP or consultant.

Squeezy App can be helpful.



## Abdominal Muscle Exercises



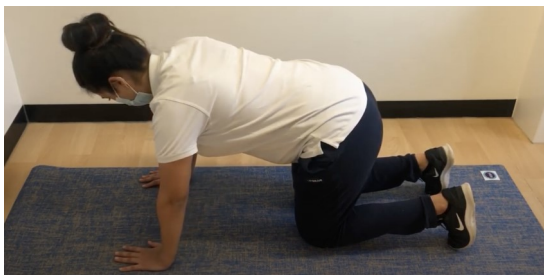
Your transverse abdominals are the deepest of the abdominal muscle group. They work together with the pelvic floor muscles and other abdominal muscles to support your pelvic organs and back. Strengthening these muscles are important to help offload and support your body throughout the duration of pregnancy.

## Transverse Abdominal Exercises

- Lie on your back but avoid lying completely flat (you may find using pillows helpful to prop you up)
- Lay the tips of your fingers on your bikini line
- Breathe in gently allowing your stomach to rise
- Breathe out keeping your back and ribcage relaxed while engaging your lower stomach muscles as if you were to “fasten the top button of a tight pair of jeans”
- Hold for three to five seconds and repeat 10 times.
- You can try this in standing which is known as the “Bump Hug”. You can watch this video by scanning or clicking on this QR code:



- You can try this in four point kneeling too.



- You can watch this video by scanning or clicking on this QR code:

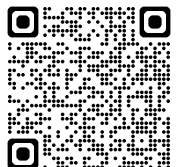


## Breathing Tips

Breathing is really important to include in your daily routine. It helps to improve mood, sleep and anxiety and helps relax the pelvic floor. Following these tips will help relax and calm the body and can be completed for 5-10 minutes:

- Adopt a comfortable position, placing your hands on your ribcage to facilitate a deeper breath
- Relax your jaw, open your mouth slightly and draw attention to your body's resting state
- Inhale through your nose, allow your ribs and stomach to expand and your pelvic floor to lengthen
- Exhale through your mouth, allow your ribs and stomach to deflate and your pelvic floor returns to rest

More tips can be found using QR code:



## Pelvic Girdle Pain Exercises

Breathing is important. Breathe in to prepare to move and always move/pull back on the band on an breath out. This allows you to use your muscles more effectively – they tighten as you breathe out. Sit up nice and tall, put the band underneath your feet and hold each end. With every movement draw in your lower tummy muscle below your belly button.

You can watch these videos by scanning or clicking on the QR codes:

- 12 x seated rows - pulling the band back with bent elbows, squeezing together your shoulder blades.



- 12 x forwards lifts - pulling the band up in front of you.



- 12 x sideways lifts - pulling the band out to the side.



- 12 x dolphin curls - keeping the band tight pulled into your ribs, sink through your lower back to curl over, roll forwards and then rebuild your spine to sit up tall.



Try these three times through in the morning and evening.

## Pacing Tips

- Be as active as possible, keeping pain-free but avoid activities that aggravate your pain
- Sit down to get dressed and undressed; avoid standing on one leg.
- **ACCEPT** help when you need it
- Take the stairs one at a time– lead with the less painful leg when going upstairs and lead with the more painful leg coming downstairs
- Reduce your stride length with walking, there is no need to rush.
- **Avoid the WADDLE!**
- Ensure you have rest periods throughout your day
- Break down your housework tasks, for every 20 minute task give yourself a 5-10 minute rest.

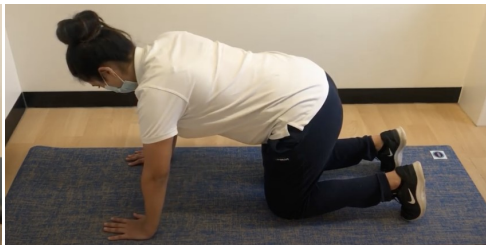
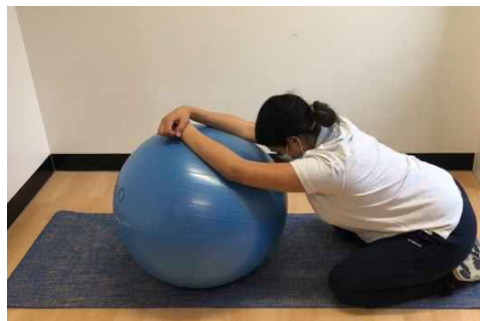


## Positions of Ease

Adopting any of these positions can be helpful during pregnancy. You can watch these videos by scanning or clicking on the QR codes:



- Cat camel stretch
- Gym ball seated rotations
- Gym ball pelvis side to side



## Physical activity for pregnant women



UK Chief Medical Officers Recommendations 2017: Physical Activity in Pregnancy.  
[bit.ly/startactiveinfo](https://bit.ly/startactiveinfo)

## Useful Resources

[Prenatal and postnatal yoga video](#)



[Start4Life Exercising in pregnancy](#)



[Tommy's - An easy pregnancy workout](#)



[Pelvic Health and Wellbeing during Pregnancy \(English\) - YouTube](#)



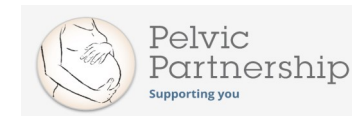
[Pelvic floor exercises during and after pregnancy \(youtube.com\)](#)



## Resources from:



**NORDIC  
FITMAMA**



## **Congratulations!**

*What an exciting time for you and your family as you  
welcome a new little person into your lives.*

*Please contact us with any questions.*

## Notes

If you are unsure about any advice or information, please arrange to contact your midwife, Consultant, GP or contact the Physiotherapy department using the below contact details.

### **How to contact us**

West Hertfordshire Therapy Unit  
Jacketts Field  
Abbots Langley  
Hertfordshire  
WD5 0PA

**Tel:** 01923 378130

**Email:** [westherts.opphysioadvice@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.opphysioadvice@nhs.net)

**Website:** [www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/services/physiotherapy-outpatients](http://www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk/services/physiotherapy-outpatients)

If you need this leaflet in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01923 217187** or email **[westherts.pals@nhs.net](mailto:westherts.pals@nhs.net)**



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