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CHIROPRACTIC ADVICE FOR MOMS-TO-BE

At this special time in your life you may be experiencing some common, though sometimes irritating, symptoms:

- **lower back pain** from postural and pelvic changes. This is especially true during late pregnancy when the baby's head presses down on a woman's back, legs, and buttocks, irritating her sciatic nerve. And for those women who already suffer from low back pain, the problem can become even worse.
- **middle back pain** from ribcage expansion
- **headaches and neck pain** from the anticipation-and worry-of it all.

During pregnancy, a woman's center of gravity almost immediately begins to shift forward to the front of her pelvis. Although a woman's pelvis has enough depth to carry a baby, the displaced weight still increases the stress on her joints. As the baby grows, the woman's weight is projected even farther forward, placing extra stress on the spinal disks. While these changes sound dramatic, pregnancy hormones help loosen the ligaments attached to the pelvic bones. But even these natural changes designed to accommodate the growing baby can result in postural imbalances, making pregnant women prone to having awkward trips and falls.

The American Chiropractic Association recommends the follow tips for pregnant women:

Exercise

- Safe exercise during pregnancy can help strengthen your muscles and prevent discomfort. Try exercising at least three times a week, gently stretching before and after exercise. If you weren't active before your pregnancy, check with your provider before starting any exercise.
- Walking, swimming, and stationary cycling are relatively safe cardiovascular exercises for pregnant women because they do not require jerking or bouncing movements.
- Be sure to exercise in an area with secure footing to minimize the likelihood of falls. Your heart rate should not exceed 150 beats per minute during exercise.
- Stop your exercise routine immediately if you notice any unusual symptoms, such as vaginal bleeding, dizziness, nausea, weakness, blurred vision, increased swelling or heart palpitations.

Health and Safety

- Wear flat sensible shoes. High or chunky heels can exacerbate postural imbalances and make you less steady on your feet, especially as your pregnancy progresses.
- When picking up children, bend from the knees, not the waist. And never turn your head when you lift. Avoid picking up heavy objects, if possible.
- Get plenty of rest. Pamper yourself and ask for help if you need it. Take a nap if you're tired, or lie down and elevate your feet for a few moments when you need a break.

Pregnancy Ergonomics: Your Bed and Desk

- Sleep on your side with a pillow between your knees to take pressure off your lower back. Full-length "body pillows" or "pregnancy wedges" may be helpful. Lying on your left or right side allows unobstructed blood flow and helps your kidneys flush waste from your body.
- If you have to sit at a computer for long hours, make your workstation ergonomically correct. Position the computer monitor so the top of the screen is at or below your eye level, and place your feet on a small footrest to take pressure off your legs and feet. Take periodic breaks every 30 minutes with a quick walk around the office.

How Can Your Doctor of Chiropractic Help?

Chiropractic is the art, science and philosophy that recognize that the body is a self healing organism, and works in conjunction with those natural healing abilities. Gentle realignment of the spinal and pelvic bones allows the nervous system contained within to function optimally, and often relieves the discomfort associated with spinal misalignment. There are special techniques for use in treating the pregnant woman, and even a special table that allows her to lay on her stomach...a welcome change especially in those later months!

Once delivery occurs, it is very important that the spinal and pelvic bones return to their normal alignment as the ligaments surrounding them "tighten". Breastfeeding moms may also experience middle back pain from the changes in breast size and the positions necessary for feedings. Again chiropractors can help with these situations, and offer home recommendations for additional relief.

Pregnant women are taking more responsibility for their bodies. They are reading more, asking more questions, eating better, exercising more and exploring healthier ways of taking care of themselves. Chiropractic care can be an integral part of these healthy attitudes!

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