

Physical Therapy Before, During, and After Pregnancy



Pregnancy is a time of change – change to the body, mind, heart, and soul. It can be a time of excitement and anticipation, but it can also be a time of worry and uncertainty. One thing is for certain however, change. Understanding the musculoskeletal changes can allow you to better embrace this beautiful time. It can also help you know when to seek a physical therapist to address some of the aches and pain, and even help you manage pain during labor and delivery.

THE BENEFITS OF PHYSICAL THERAPY BEFORE AND AFTER DELIVERY INCLUDE:

- ♀ Preparation for childbirth to minimize harm to the pelvic floor and abdominal musculature
- ♀ Pain relief measures during pregnancy, labor, and post-partum
- ♀ Educate woman and partner in coping, mobility, positioning, and hands-on support during labor and delivery
- ♀ Strength, endurance, muscle tone, and posture training during pregnancy, labor, and post-partum
- ♀ Strengthening of the pelvic floor and abdominals including treatment of diastasis recti (separation of the abdominals)
- ♀ Treatment of scar tissue and pain from tearing, episiotomy, or cesarian incision
- ♀ Physical rehabilitation post-partum and safe return to exercise

PHYSICAL CHANGES DURING PREGNANCY

During pregnancy, many changes occur in the female body. The rib angle changes, and the diaphragm elevates to make room for baby, making breathing more difficult. The center of gravity is shifted forward limiting abdominal function, and hormonal changes create a lax environment. The changes the body undergoes during pregnancy, labor, and delivery increase the risk of incontinence, prolapse, painful scars, and other pelvic floor dysfunctions. A physical therapist can provide education that focuses on proper posture and positioning throughout pregnancy to reduce the stress on ligaments and joints. They can provide hands-on techniques to address musculoskeletal pelvic imbalances, reduce pain, improve the contractility and relaxation of the pelvic floor, and address ligament restrictions that can cause pain and even make it difficult for baby to rotate or turn.

LABOR AND DELIVERY

In preparation for labor and delivery, a physical therapist can provide education to the pregnant woman and partner in mobility, positioning, and hands-on techniques to reduce pain during labor and delivery and even increase the pelvic diameter to facilitate baby's descent through the birth canal during the different phases of labor. A physical therapist can also address pelvic obliquity and uterine restrictions that can contribute to a malposition of baby.

AFTER DELIVERY

Following delivery, the focus shifts to healing of the pelvic floor and abdominals. Learning how to appropriately isolate and contract the pelvic floor and transverse abdominis soon after delivery, can have advantageous effects in healing, regardless of the type of delivery. It can also reduce the risk of urinary and fecal incontinence. A physical therapist can also assist with facilitating and reducing pain with bowel movements after delivery. They can even help with positioning and posture when carrying and feeding your baby now that your center of mass is once again changing.

Pregnancy is a beautiful time full of excitement and anticipation. Don't let pain hinder such a magical experience. Schedule your appointment today with Dr. Mackenzie H. Lampe, Physical Therapist. Kenzie has specialized training in obstetric physical therapy to assist your pregnancy, delivery, and post-partum therapy needs.



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