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Mother and Child Care



2nd Edition

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CHAPTER

Care of Body During Pregnancy

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The reduction of the strain during pregnancy is essential which is best done by some gentle exercises and relaxation. The exercise and relaxation may be taught in the antenatal period and can be practiced from early pregnancy.

BACK

During pregnancy, many women a develop backache because of hormonal and postural changes. The following exercise will help to reduce backache.

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet on bed. Draw in your abdomen and press the back of your waist down into the bed. Hold this position for 4 seconds, but do not hold your breath, then gently let go. Repeat 5 times.

Lying flat on your back in pregnancy may cause faintness.

- Avoid heavy lifting
- Use your back correctly to prevent strain while at work and doing household jobs.

PELVIC JOINTS

Some women suffer from ache in pelvic joints because of hormonal changes. Take care of the pelvic joints as follows:

- Stand evenly on both feet
- Sit on both "cheeks" and do not cross legs
- When rolling over in bed, bend knees, press them together, tighten your seat and abdominal muscle and then roll
- If you have young children, try not to carry them on one hip
- Get into a car by sitting on the seat and then bring in both legs together, reverse to get out.

If you have problems with these joints or with your back, consult your obstetric physiotherapist and your doctor.

ABDOMINAL MUSCLE

Abdominal muscles are naturally stretched with growth of the baby. Strong exercises, such as "sit-ups" and "double leg lifts" will cause more stretch and should be avoided.

To get up from lying down, always bend your knees, press them together and roll onto your side before sitting up, reverse to lie down.

PELVIC FLOOR MUSCLES

These are the main support muscles on the floor of the pelvis and are very important during pregnancy, labor and postnatal months. Pelvic floor muscle exercises should be practiced from pregnancy, so that it can be done subsequently during labor and after birth.

Close and draw up in the back passages as if you are trying to keep bowel closed. Then, close and draw up in the birth canal. Hold this contraction for 4 seconds, then relax slowly. Try to make a habit of doing this 4 times after each time you empty your bladder. Stopping and starting when emptying the bladder can be used as an occasional test of these muscles.

GENERAL EXERCISES

It is good for you to continue with most of your usual sports and activities, but some can damage joints which are loosened during pregnancy, hence avoid taking up new strenuous exercises.

Squatting position is comfortable for some women and useful during labor, start practicing as follows: Hold something strong, such as heavy furniture, stand with the feet about half a meter apart and toes turned out, then bend your knees keeping heels on the floor. Hold this position for a moment or two and then stand up. Gradually lengthen the time 5–10 minutes twice a day.

MINOR PROBLEMS

Cramp

This is due to various biochemical changes during pregnancy and changing pressure in the abdomen. Wearing very high heeled shoes and sitting cross-legged can make cramp worse. Some women find that it helps to exercise the feet before going to bed—rotate the feet ten times in each direction. Try to stretch your legs straight and pull

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your toes hard up just before you go to sleep. Another tip is to raise the foot end of the bed on couple of bricks.

Swollen Ankles and Varicose Veins

Women with swollen ankles and varicose veins are advised to rest lying down with legs supported in a raised position, then exercise your feet up and down and in circles. Avoid standing for long periods and consider wearing tight leg support.

Numb Fingers

This may be a problem in the morning and is due to extra fluid in the body, increasing pressure at the wrist. Wearing wrist supports tightly at night will solve your problem.

If swollen ankles and/or fingers are accompanied by puffy face, headaches or flashing light, consult your doctor immediately.

Rib Flare

This is due to the growing baby pushing the ribs out of their normal position. Try to change position frequently and avoid sitting on low chairs and other positions, which bring the ribs close to pelvis. Sitting cross-legged (tailor fashion) with hands on head also gives some relief.

Emotional Changes

The hormonal changes in pregnancy lead to emotional "ups and downs" and sometimes forgetfulness. After the birth of the baby, these problems will get better.

Stress, Tension and Relaxation

Some women feel extremely tired, others develop aches and pains which are not due to specific illness, but are related to tension.

Stress and tension cause an increase in blood pressure, heart rate and rate of breathing which can lead to feelings of panic as well as overloading the systems of the body. Learning a relaxation technique and using it regularly has been shown to mildly reduce increased blood pressure. Women, who learn relaxation and use it during labor, generally cope better with pain and feel more comfortable. During pregnancy, relaxation will help one to rest more effectively and can also help one to sleep again. Try to have a session at least once a day using positions of comfort learned.

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Mother and Child Care

Salient Features

- Practical handbook on various facets of mother and child care
- Comprehensive coverage of feeding problems
- Question-answer format for better understanding of feeding problems
- Nutritive value of commonly-consumed food stuffs in detail
- Practically useful chapters on common childhood illnesses, emergencies and first aid.

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