

Exercise for low back pain and pelvic girdle pain in pregnancy

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Objectives: At the end of this session the participant will be able to:

1. Be familiar with current literature on efficacy of exercise as an intervention for low back and pelvic girdle pain in pregnancy.
2. Understand the PEDro Scale as a means of evaluating physiotherapy research literature.
3. Discern best evidence-based practices for use of exercise as an intervention for low back and pelvic girdle pain in pregnancy.

Pelvic girdle and low back pain are common in pregnant women with prevalence rates averaging near 50% at some time during a woman's pregnancy. Assessment of exercise intervention studies may provide the physical therapist with evidence to assist in care of the pregnant population with these dysfunctions.

This presentation will cover current literature on the use of exercise to treat and/or prevent low back pain and pelvic girdle pain in pregnancy. A recently published systematic review and some very recent additional studies will inform the discussion.

The systematic review of prospective clinical trials, published in the *Journal of Women's Health Physical Therapy* in 2012 (1) involved a search of CINAHL, MEDLINE, PEDro, and the COCHRANE data bases and reference screening was conducted for prospective clinical trials published in English. Three reviewers used a consensus process to select articles for final review. Two of the reviewers then independently reviewed the selected articles according to the PEDro Scale. Where available, the reviewer's results were compared against PEDro Reviews and reviewer scores were altered if both reviewers agreed that the published PEDro Score was more accurate.

In this systematic review, eleven studies were reviewed. Four were deemed to be of good quality (range 7-8/10); 5 of moderate quality (range 4-6/10); 2 of poor quality (1-2/10). High-quality studies support the intervention of exercise, either alone or combined with advice or other treatment (support belts, acupuncture) as a means of prevention or management of pelvic girdle and low back pain. One study found aquatic-based exercise to be of greater benefit than land-based exercise. Another found acupuncture superior to exercise which was, in turn, more effective than "standard treatment". Addition of pelvic support belts to exercise intervention did not further decrease pain. Reports of sick leave conflicted across studies.

References

1. Boissonnault JS, Klestinski JU, Percy K (2012). The role of exercise in the management of pelvic girdle and low back pain in pregnancy: A Systematic review of the literature. *JWHPT* 36: 69-77.