

CONDITIONS AFFECTING WOMEN

Pregnancy

Chiropractic care can help the spine and pelvis cope with the effects of pregnancy by restoring a state of balance.

During pregnancy, a woman's center of gravity shifts forward to the front of her pelvis. This additional weight in front, causes stress to the joints of the pelvis and low back. As the baby grows in size, the added weight causes the curvature of her lower back to increase, placing extra stress on the fragile facet joints on the back side of the spine. Any pre-existing problems in a woman's spine tend to be exacerbated as the spine and pelvis become overtaxed, often leading to pain and difficulty performing normal daily activities.

Studies have found that about half of all expectant mothers develop low-back pain at some point during their pregnancies. This is especially true during the third trimester when the baby's body gains the most weight. Chiropractic care throughout pregnancy can relieve and even prevent the pain and discomfort frequently experienced in pregnancy, and creates an environment for an easier, safer delivery. It is one safe and effective way to help the spine and pelvis cope with the rapid increase in physical stress by restoring a state of balance. In fact, most women have found that chiropractic care helped them avoid the use of pain medications during their pregnancy, and studies have shown that chiropractic adjustments help to reduce time in labor. Your chiropractor should be your partner for a healthy pregnancy. They can provide adjustments, as well as offer nutritional, ergonomic and exercise advice to help address your special needs.

Chiropractic Tips for Pregnant Women:

- Be sure to get adjusted regularly. Chiropractic care is important to help maintain a healthy skeletal structure and nervous system function throughout a pregnancy and childbirth.
- Do some gentle exercise each day. Walking, swimming, or stationary cycling are relatively safe cardiovascular exercises for pregnant women. Avoid any activities that involve jerking or bouncing movements. Stop exercise immediately if you notice any unusual symptom, such as nausea, dizziness or weakness.
- Wear flat shoes with arch supports. Your feet become more susceptible to injury during pregnancy, partially due to a rapidly increasing body weight, but also because the ligaments that support the feet become more lax.
- When picking up children, bend from the knees, not the waist. Your low back is much more prone to injury during pregnancy.
- When sleeping, lay on your side with a pillow between your knees to take pressure off your lower back. Full-length "body pillows" or "pregnancy wedges" are very popular and can be helpful.
- Eat several small meals or snacks every few hours, rather than three large meals per day. This will help alleviate nausea, stabilize blood sugar and allow your body to extract the maximum amount of nutrients from the foods that you eat.

- Take a prenatal vitamin with at least 400 micrograms of folic acid every day; 800 micrograms is even better. Folic acid has been shown to dramatically reduce the risk of neural tube defects in a developing fetus. Be sure to check with your doctor before taking any vitamin or herbal supplement to make sure it's safe for you and the baby.

PMS

Several studies have shown that chiropractic care can help decrease many of the symptoms of PMS without the potential side effects of prescription drugs.

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is characterized by mood swings, swollen abdomen, headaches, back pain, food cravings, fatigue, irritability or depression in the days before a woman's monthly period. The severity of these symptoms can range from mild to incapacitating and may last from a couple of days to two weeks.

It has been estimated that three of every four menstruating women experience some form of premenstrual syndrome, and it is more likely to trouble women from their late 20s to early 40s. Between 10 to 20 percent of all women experience symptoms that are severe or even disabling.

PMS is thought to be a side effect of hormonal changes during the monthly menstrual cycle and can be made worse by stress, decreased serotonin levels in the brain and subluxations in the low back.

Although chiropractic care cannot fix the way your body responds to the hormonal changes that precede menstruation, several studies have shown that it can help decrease many of the symptoms of PMS without the potential side effects of prescription drugs. Since the nerves that exit the low back are responsible for regulating all of the tissues in the lower abdomen, any pressure or irritation that can be alleviated through chiropractic care can be helpful.