

Osteopathy and chiropractic & Pregnancy

- Osteopaths and chiropractors view your skeleton as the main supporting framework of your body, similar to “scaffolding”. Trauma, disease or accidents, and conditions such as pregnancy, which place extra pressure on your skeleton can cause misalignment of your framework, leading to tension on organs and other parts of your body.
- Treatment involves manipulation of joints, ligaments and bones to restore and maintain balance between nerves, muscles and the skeleton. Osteopaths use techniques, including massage, to help joint mobility and re-align your skeleton and attached organs. Chiropractors concentrate more on joint position and perform manipulation of spinal joints, generally without massage.
- Osteopathy or chiropractic in pregnancy can relieve “morning sickness”, backache, sciatica and groin or pubic pain, headaches, migraine, heartburn, carpal tunnel syndrome (wrist pain) and chest and rib pain. There are also special techniques which help to turn a breech baby. Chiropractic can treat children with asthma and infants with colic, and cranial osteopathy is wonderful for fractious babies or hyperactive children.
- If you have treatment before pregnancy, tell your practitioner if you think you may be pregnant, as it may be inappropriate to treat you in the early weeks. If you have high blood pressure (pre-eclampsia), take aspirin routinely to prevent complications, or are taking anticoagulant drugs or have a clotting disorder, osteopathy and chiropractic are contraindicated.

Chiropractic care is health maintenance of the spinal column, discs, related nerves and bone geometry without drugs or surgery. It involves the art and science of adjusting misaligned joints of the body, especially of the spine, which reduces spinal nerve stress and therefore promotes health throughout the body.

Is chiropractic care safe during pregnancy?

There are no known contraindications to chiropractic care throughout pregnancy. All chiropractors are trained to work with women who are pregnant. Investing in the fertility and pregnancy wellness of women who are pregnant or trying to conceive is a routine treatment for most chiropractors.

Some chiropractors take a specific interest in prenatal and peri-natal care and seek additional training. Below represents designations of chiropractors who have taken advanced steps in working with infertility and pregnancy wellness.

- * DACCP - Diplomate with ICPA reflecting highest level of advanced training
- * CACCP - Certified with the ICPA reflecting advanced training
- * Member of ICPA reflecting special interest
- * Webster Certified - trained to specifically work with breech positions
- * Find a Chiropractor in your area

Chiropractors that have been trained to work with pregnant women may use tables that adjust for a

pregnant woman's body, and they will use techniques that avoid unneeded pressure on the abdomen.

A chiropractor who is versed in the needs of women who are pregnant will also provide you with exercises and stretches that are safe to use during pregnancy and compliment any adjustments made to your spine.

Why should I have chiropractic care during pregnancy?

During pregnancy, there are several physiological and endocrinological changes that occur in preparation for creating the environment for the developing baby. The following changes could result in a misaligned spine or joint:

- * Protruding abdomen and increased back curve
- * Pelvic changes
- * Postural adaptations

Establishing pelvic balance and alignment is another reason to obtain chiropractic care during pregnancy. When the pelvis is misaligned it may reduce the amount of room available for the developing baby. This restriction is called intrauterine constraint. A misaligned pelvis may also make it difficult for the baby to get into the best possible position for delivery.

The nervous system is the master communication system to all the body systems including the reproductive system. Keeping the spine aligned helps the entire body work more effectively.

What are the benefits of chiropractic care during pregnancy?

Chiropractic care during pregnancy may provide benefits for women who are pregnant. Potential benefits of chiropractic care during pregnancy include:

- * Maintaining a healthier pregnancy
- * Controlling symptoms of nausea
- * Reducing the time of labor and delivery
- * Relieving back, neck or joint pain
- * Prevent a potential cesarean section

What about chiropractic care and breech deliveries?

The late Larry Webster, D.C., Founder of the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association, developed a specific chiropractic analysis and adjustment which enables chiropractors to establish balance in the pregnant woman's pelvis and reduce undue stress to her uterus and supporting ligaments. This balanced state in the pelvis makes it easier for a breech baby to turn naturally. The technique is known as the Webster Technique.

It is considered normal by some for a baby to present breech until the third trimester. Most birth practitioners are not concerned with breech presentations until a patient is 37 weeks along. Approximately 4% of all pregnancies result in a breech presentation.

The Journal of Manipulative and Physiological Therapeutics reported in the July/August 2002 issue an 82% success rate of babies turning vertex when doctors of chiropractic used the Webster Technique. Further, the results from the study suggest that it may be beneficial to perform the Webster Technique as soon as the 8th month of pregnancy when a woman has a breech presentation.

Currently, the International Chiropractic Pediatric Association recommends that women receive chiropractic care throughout pregnancy to establish pelvic balance and optimize the room a baby has for development throughout pregnancy. With a balanced pelvis, babies have a greater chance of moving into the correct position for birth, and the crisis and worry associated with breech and posterior presentations may be avoided altogether. Optimal baby positioning at the time of birth also eliminates the potential for dystocia (difficult labor) and therefore results in easier and safer deliveries for both the mother and baby.

Regular chiropractic care is an integral part of the prenatal and postpartum care during pregnancy. It helps keep mom feeling good and assists her in coping with the physical stresses of an ever changing body.

- * Neuromuscular and Biochemical Changes During Pregnancy
- * Chiropractic Treatment of the Neuromuscular and Biochemical Problems
- * Frequently Asked Questions
- * Chiropractic and Pregnancy Scientific Studies

Neuromuscular and Biochemical Changes During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, most women experience a number of neuromuscular and biochemical problems which respond favorably to gentle, safe, noninvasive chiropractic care. These include:

- * release of the hormone relaxin causes muscle and ligament relaxation
 - o allows joints to more easily misalign
- * increased weight gain
 - o increased demand and fatigue on spinal and pelvic muscles
 - o increased stress on spinal and pelvic ligaments
 - o increase in lumbar and thoracic spinal curves which further increase the above
 - o increased joint stress and thus occurrence of vertebral and sacroiliac joint misalignments
- * change in weight distribution
 - o increased demand and fatigue on spinal and pelvic muscles
 - o increased stress on spinal and pelvic ligaments
 - o increase in lumbar and thoracic spinal curves which further increase the above
 - o increased joint stress and thus occurrence of vertebral and sacroiliac joint misalignments

The above changes primarily affect the pelvic and spinal ligaments, muscles, joints and other supportive soft tissues. These changes cause sprain/strains of pelvic and spinal structures, as well as alteration of the normal spinal curvatures and spinal biomechanics. The result is an increased stress on the body leading to pain and discomfort.

Chiropractic Treatment of the Neuromuscular and Biochemical Problems

Doctors of chiropractic can alleviate the uncomfortable symptoms arising from the muscular, ligamentous, and biomechanical stresses encountered during pregnancy. We accomplish this through the use of a number of highly specialized procedures and techniques:

- * GENTLE SPINAL ADJUSTIVE PROCEDURES - specifically designed for use in the pregnant female
 - o assist in maintaining a spine free from vertebral misalignments and fixations - optimizing spinal biomechanics
 - o keep pelvis and spine in correct position/posture
 - o assist in pain relief by (1) reflexively reducing pain levels, and (2) reducing spinal and pelvic stresses which produce soft tissue pain
 - o keep tissues and biomechanics functioning optimally to minimize complications during birth
- * THERAPEUTIC EXERCISES AND STRETCHES - safe for use during pregnancy
 - o keep spinal musculature strong, balanced, and pain-free
 - o enable spinal muscles to maintain the spine and body in a neutral, correct posture
 - o keep mom active and mobile
- * SOFT TISSUE WORK - massage, trigger point work, soft tissue mobilization, etc.
 - o keep muscles relaxed and flexible
 - o reduces bouts of muscle aches and pains
 - o reduces spinal stress
- * DIETARY AND NUTRITIONAL COUNSELING - unique to the pregnant mother
 - o prevent neural tube and other birth defects
 - o increase the chances for a healthy baby
 - o assist the mother in maintaining optimal energy levels
 - o keep mother happy and healthy during stressful periods
- * GENERAL PREGNANCY INFORMATION - general info on pregnancy
 - o answer mother's questions
 - o improve mother's health
 - o optimize birthing process
 - o enhance baby's health

Is Chiropractic Care Safe During Pregnancy? Chiropractic care during pregnancy is safe for both mother and fetus. Spinal adjustments are especially gentle during pregnancy as far less force is required to correct subluxations. This is due to the increase in hormones causing significant muscle and ligamentous relaxation. Special "adjustive" positions are also used to provide comfort and safety for both mom and fetus.