

6 effective ways to manage sciatica pain during pregnancy

Got pain in the buttock or back and down the leg? It could be because of sciatica. If you're experiencing sciatica pain during pregnancy, here are ways to deal with it.

Be it young or old, health should never take a backseat. But women tend to focus more on their health when they are pregnant as they think of their baby. Expecting moms often feel aches and pains in different parts of the body. If you feel like a sharp shooting pain in the buttock or lower back that radiates down from behind the leg to the hip, knee, and often to the foot, it could be due to sciatica. Read on to find out how you can deal with sciatica during pregnancy.

Health Shots connected with Dr Latha Balasundaram, Head – Physiotherapy, Fernandez Hospital, Hyderabad, to find out how to handle sciatica during pregnancy.

What is sciatica?

It is a term that is used to describe the immense pain that comes from the buttock or back and travels down the leg. It happens when the sciatic nerve is compressed by bulging discs, or irritated by the piriformis muscle or during pregnancy, says Dr Balasundaram. It is mostly a one-sided pain that can be mild if you are lucky or severe. It can even impact daily activities depending on the intensity. So, if you try to lift up heavy things, women with sciatica will find it difficult.

Tips to handle sciatica during pregnancy

The expert says that weight of the growing uterus, lax pelvic ligaments, altered biomechanics, and fluid retention during pregnancy can contribute to the pain. During the later stages, the head of the baby may also directly press onto the nerve triggering sciatica.

1. Place a hot water bag where it's paining

When you place it on the area where it's paining, the hot water bag can help to increase blood flow to the area, relax the muscles, and reduce inflammation, says the expert.

2. Avoid prolonged sitting

You should frequently change your positions to maintain good posture, reduce the risk of muscle strain, and prevent aches and pains that can result from extended periods of sitting.

3. Nerve flossing

Floss the sciatic nerve while sitting in a chair by straightening the painful leg at the knee, and moving the foot forward and backward at the ankle.

4. Piriformis stretching

This can be done in the sitting position or while lying on the back, shares the expert. Place foot of the painful leg on knee of the painless leg while sitting in a chair. Keeping the back straight and while maintaining the position, try to bend forward from the hips.

5. Back bending exercises

Back bending exercises can help to activate the spinal extensor muscles, which are a group of muscles that run along the back of the spine and help to support the upright posture of the body. These exercises can be beneficial for sciatica pain. Some of the back bending exercises are Cobra Pose, Sphinx Pose and Upward Facing Dog Pose.

6. Restrict forward bending

Restricting forward bending can be important for women who are sciatic. Forward bending can place stress on the discs and muscles in the spine, which can exacerbate existing pain or cause new injuries.

If these don't help or the pain gets too bad or worsens, just consult a professional.