

# Osteopathic manipulative therapy significantly improves low back pain in postpartum women

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German researchers found osteopathic manipulative therapy (OMTh) decreased postpartum low back pain by over 70 percent in women who had given birth at least three months before beginning treatment, according to a new study published in July issue of the *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*.

The eight week study, devised as a pragmatic [randomized controlled trial](#), surveyed 80 women experiencing [low back pain](#) three to 15 months postpartum. Women in the study group received four OMTh treatments at two week intervals. Participants in the control group did not receive OMTh and were not allowed to receive any additional pain relief treatment, such as medication or therapy.

On average, those who received OMTh reported a 73 percent decrease in pain, compared to only seven percent in the [control group](#). Pain was assessed by a 10-point Visual Analogue Scale and functional disability as measured by the Oswestry Disability Index.

"Women who've recently given birth are rarely studied beyond screening for postpartum depression and delivery complications, even though it's well documented that low back pain is a common issue that hinders their quality of life during an already stressful time," said Jennifer Caudle, DO, assistant professor of family medicine at Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine. "This study shows that osteopathic

manipulative therapy can relieve their pain without medication that could be passed to a breastfeeding infant."

It's estimated that about 50 percent of pregnant women suffer from some kind of [lower back pain](#) either during or after their pregnancies. The symptoms may start during the first trimester of pregnancy, during labor or in the postpartum period.

In the United States osteopathic physicians, or DOs, receive additional training in diagnosing, treating and preventing illness or injury with osteopathic manipulative treatment (OMT). These fully licensed physicians move muscles and joints using osteopathic techniques that include stretching, gentle pressure and resistance. When appropriate, OMT can complement or replace drugs or surgery, bringing an extra dimension to standard medical care.

[The study](#) is accessible online until Sept. 30, 2015.

Provided by American Osteopathic Association

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