

Pelvic girdle pain during pregnancy is common, but can be relieved

March 13 2024



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Acupuncture and transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) are two interchangeable treatments to relieve pelvic girdle pain during pregnancy. Both treatments also alleviate the pregnant woman's concern about pain, according to a [thesis](#) from the University of Gothenburg.

More than 1 in 2 pregnant women are affected by pelvic girdle pain to some degree. Pelvic girdle pain often makes it difficult to walk. For 1 in 10 women with more severe pain, there could be residual symptoms more than ten years after giving birth.

"Pelvic girdle pain, can be caused by various changes in the body due to pregnancy, and it is important to identify such pain at an early stage in order to offer treatment," emphasizes physiotherapist Annika Svahn Ekdahl, the author of the thesis.

"Pregnant women are often told that it's not surprising they have pains in their back or pelvis, for example, and that it's something related to pregnancy. But when your whole life is affected by the pain, it becomes a problem. Then it is no longer normal," she says.

Comparing acupuncture and TENS

The thesis compares the effect of two different treatments: [acupuncture](#) and [transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation](#) (TENS). In the study, 113 pregnant women were randomly selected to receive either 10 acupuncture sessions with a physiotherapist or daily at-home TENS [treatment](#) over five weeks. The treatments were found to give equivalent results.

"Both treatments reduced the participants' pain intensity and concern related to pain, while also helping them maintain their physical activity.

This is remarkable because [pelvic girdle pain](#) often leads to reduced physical activity," says Annika Svahn Ekdahl.

Pain and anxiety

The participants in both groups had improved their functional status over time and about half of them achieved the general recommendations for [physical activity](#) three years after giving birth.

"At the same time, we found that some women still experienced persistent pelvic pain. "The concern women felt about their problems was also related to how well they were able to cope with everyday life," says Annika Svahn Ekdahl.

"One interesting finding is that concern about pain is a major problem, in addition to the actual pain. Concern relating to pain seems to be a significant factor in women's functional status."

When asked about their expectations coming into a meeting with a physiotherapist, [pregnant women](#) with pelvic pain expressed that they want advice tailored to them. They want expert help to deal with their specific situation.

More information: Pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain management. Tailored physiotherapy treatment strategies anchored in women's experiences and expectations. gupea.ub.gu.se/handle/2077/79098

Provided by University of Gothenburg

Citation: Pelvic girdle pain during pregnancy is common, but can be relieved (2024, March 13) retrieved 30 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-03-pelvic-girdle-pain-pregnancy-common.html>

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