

# 9

# Pregnancy Stretches

FOR THE

**WHOLE BODY**

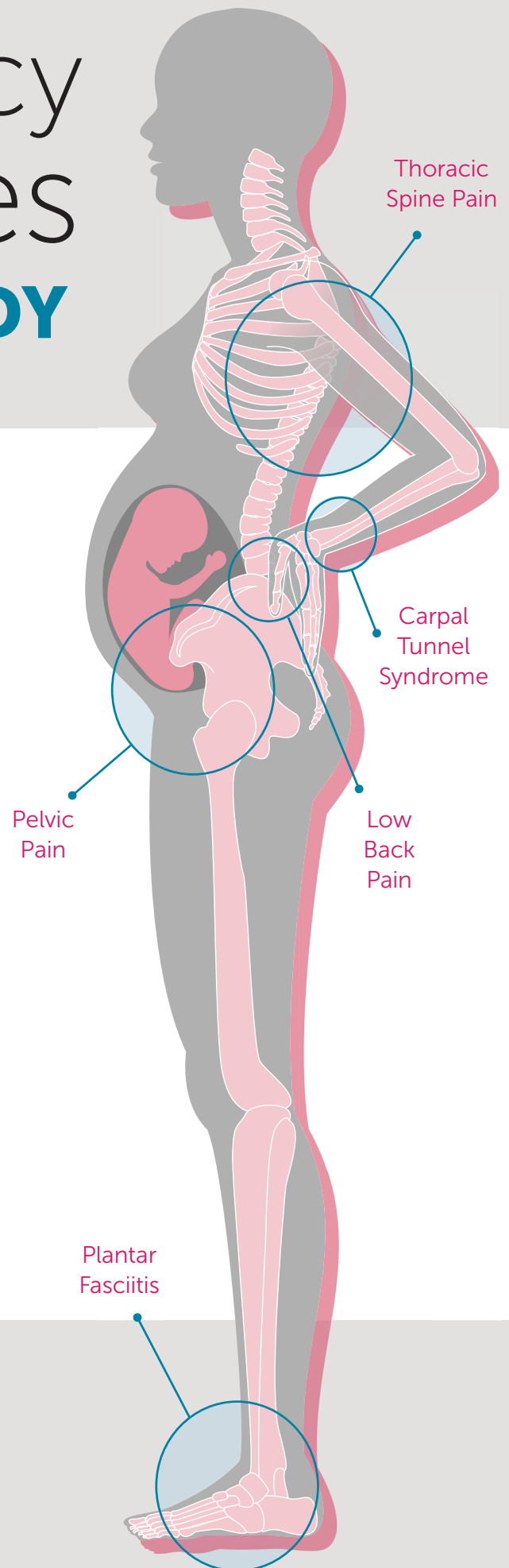
Many women expect to experience **low back pain** at some point in their pregnancy, but some of the other musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions associated with pregnancy can come as more of a surprise.

The hormonal changes that can affect your joints, as well as the additional weight being carried in pregnancy can lead to aches, pains or discomfort. These changes can affect other areas of the body including the **pelvic area, hands, wrists, feet** and the **thoracic (mid-to-upper) spine** as well. There are a number of simple stretches that can easily be performed at home and which can help provide relief from these painful or uncomfortable conditions.

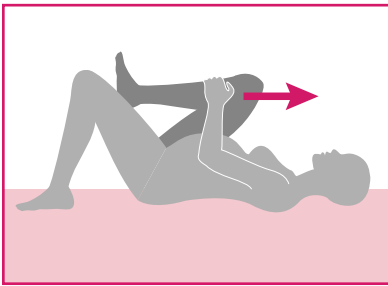
To help alleviate this pain and discomfort, consider including a chiropractor as part of your prenatal care team. Chiropractors can provide safe, effective, and drug free conservative care to relieve pain by decreasing the pressure on the joints, muscles, and nerves of the spine and pelvis.

**Please read on for nine easy stretches.**

Consult your healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about safe levels of exercise during pregnancy.



# LOW BACK PAIN

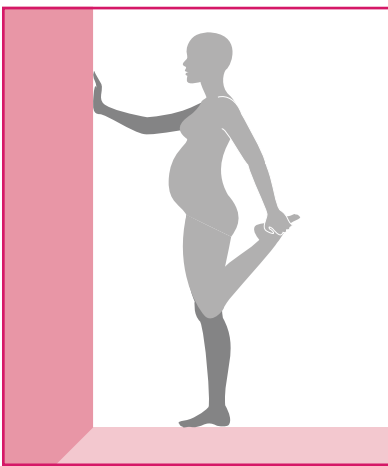


## 1 KNEES TO CHEST

**Note:** Stretches or exercises performed while laying on your back should be limited beyond the fourth month of pregnancy. Instead, modify the movements by performing them while lying on your side or while standing.

Try this stretch to relieve tightness and tension in your lower back.

- Pull knee to chest until a comfortable stretch is felt in hip and lower back.
- Hold 15 seconds.
- Repeat with opposite leg.
- Repeat 5-10 times each leg.
- You should feel the stretch in your low back and buttocks.

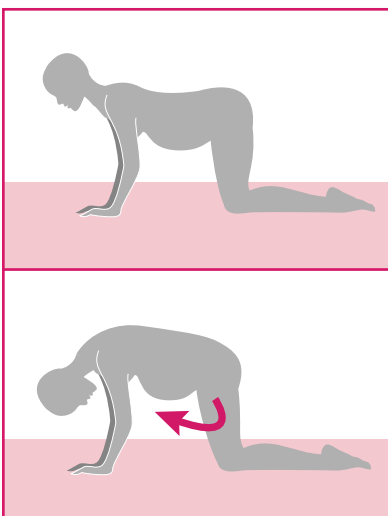


## 2 QUAD STRETCH

If you have tight quadriceps, they will affect the tilt of your pelvis and therefore your lower back.

- Stand next to a chair, bed or table.
- Keep your thighs together and your knee pointing toward the ground.
- Pull your abdominal muscles in and maintain a straight back.
- Grab your left foot with your left hand and pull toward your seat.
- Do your best to keep your chest upright, and don't worry about how close your foot is to your seat.
- Keep your focus on getting a good stretch in your quad.
- Hold for 30 seconds, then repeat on other leg.

# PELVIC PAIN

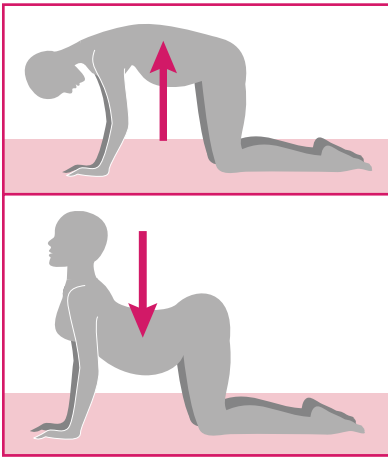


## 3 PELVIC TILT

In preparation for birth, ligaments in your pelvis soften during pregnancy, allowing more movement in the pelvic joints, and potentially causing pain and discomfort. Pelvic tilts can help to strengthen the core muscles and improve pelvic stability.

- While sitting, standing, lying on your back or all fours, use abdominal muscles to slowly bring pubic bone forward while tucking in buttocks in a "scooping" type motion.
- Then rock pelvis the opposite direction to create an arch in the low back, working within the range of motion that is comfortable and pain-free for you.
- Do 1-3 sets of 3-10 repetitions each.

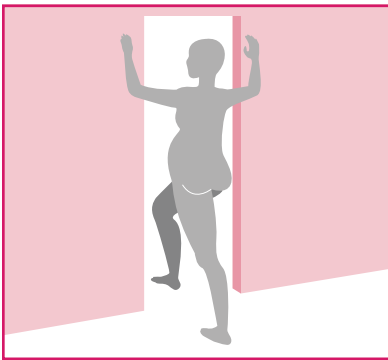
# THORACIC SPINE PAIN



## 4 CAT/CAMEL STRETCH

This stretch increases flexibility and mobility in the spine, while strengthening the back muscles, helping to prevent further aches and pains.

- On all fours, let head relax down and maintain an abdominal brace as you raise your spine up between the shoulder blades.
- Let spine relax slowly down through the shoulder blades.
- Do 1-3 sets of 3-10 repetitions each.



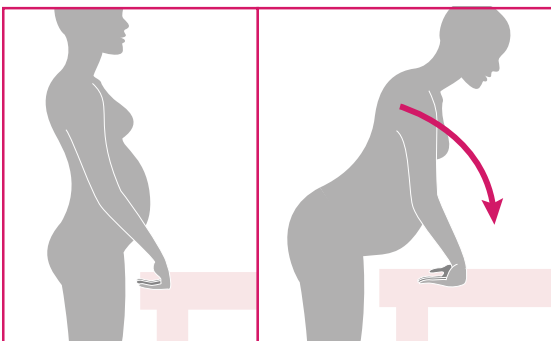
## 5 DOORWAY PECTORAL STRETCH

When the muscles of the chest are tight, they can cause the muscles of the upper back to overcompensate. Release chest tension with this stretch.

- Stand just in front of an open doorway and place one hand on each wall at shoulder height.
- Slowly lean chest forward into doorway, keeping upper body tall, to feel a stretch in the front of the chest.
- Hold up to 60 seconds.

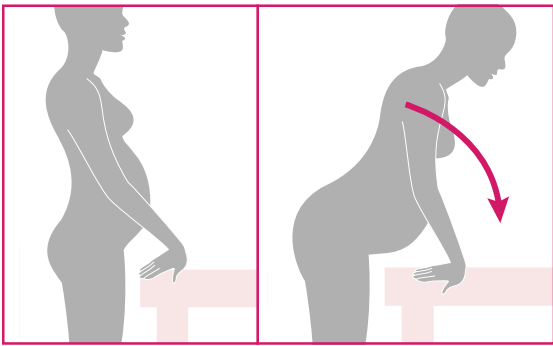
# WRIST/HAND PAIN (e.g. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome)

Fluid retention and swelling associated with pregnancy can increase pressure on the carpal tunnel, compressing the median nerve that runs through it. Since carpal tunnel syndrome reduces mobility in the wrist, these stretches can help increase mobility and rebuild your range of motion. Tight forearm muscles can also contribute to these kinds of symptoms, so doing these stretches will help decrease muscle tension and maintain mobility in the wrist.



## 6 FOREARM EXTENSORS

- Stand facing a table that is lower than hip height
- Place the **backs of your hands** on the table with the fingers pointed straight back towards your legs
- If you do not feel a stretch yet, create a comfortable stretch in the forearms by slowly bending and leaning your body away from your hands while keeping the backs of the hands as flat on the table as possible
- Hold for 30 seconds

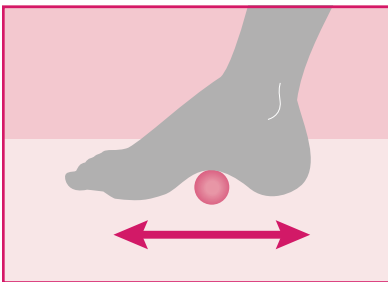


## 7 WRIST AND FOREARM STRETCH

This stretch is similar to #6, but the palms face downwards in this variation.

- Stand facing a table that is lower than hip height
- Place hands **palms down** on the table with the fingers pointed straight back towards your legs
- If you do not feel a stretch yet, create a comfortable stretch in the forearms and wrists by slowly bending and leaning your body away from your hands while keeping the palms as flat on the table as possible
- Hold for 30 seconds

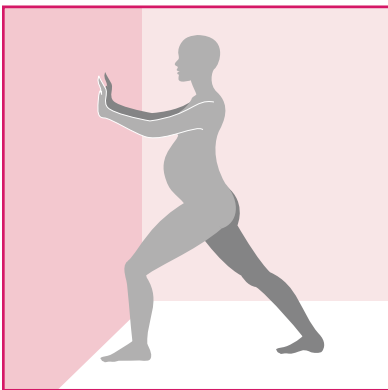
## FOOT PAIN (e.g. Plantar Fasciitis)



## 8 ROLLING A BALL UNDER YOUR FOOT

Weight gained in pregnancy can cause your feet to pronate, meaning that your arch flattens out when you take a step. This places strain on the plantar fascia ligament running the length of the bottom of your foot, causing pain.

- Massage the bottoms of your feet by rolling them over a firm ball, such as a golf ball, taking care not to press too hard on the injured area.
- It is also useful to ice the area. To do this, try rolling the foot over a frozen water bottle.



## 9 CALF STRETCH

Tight muscles in your calves can also aggravate plantar fasciitis, so stretches targeting the calves can help alleviate symptoms.

- Stand with your left leg back and straight with the heel down.
- Bend your right leg and place your hands against a wall.
- Move your hips forward until you feel a stretch in your calf.
- Switch legs and repeat.
- Hold each stretch for at least 30 seconds and do one or two repetitions two to three times a day.

For additional pregnancy resources, more information on chiropractic care, or to find a chiropractor, please visit [www.chiropractic.on.ca](http://www.chiropractic.on.ca).



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