

Chiropractic Care During Pregnancy

Postural Changes in Pregnancy

During the course of pregnancy, a woman's body undergoes innumerable changes biochemically and structurally which can create postural strain and neck and back pain. A brief look at the anatomy of the spine provides insight as to why chiropractic adjustments can facilitate a healthier, more comfortable pregnancy.

The vertebral column is a strong, flexible rod composed of a series of bones called vertebrae which enclose and protect the spinal cord, support the head, and serve as an attachment for the ribs and muscles of the back. This "spine" is able to rotate and move anterior, posterior and lateral. The vertebral column shows four normal curves, which increase its strength, help maintain balance in the upright position, absorb shock, and help protect the column from fracture.

The spinal cord, which courses down the center of this column conveys sensory impulses from the peripheral nerves to the brain and conducts impulse from the seat of the Central Nervous System, the brain, to all of the peripheral nerves. When an electrical impulse is stimulated in the brain, it travels a neural pathway in the spinal cord. Misalignment of this vertebral column can create pressure on the spinal nerves; irritating the surrounding tissue and causing impeded nerve flow, discomfort and/or pain.

Over the course of a forty week gestation, a mother's weight gain will ideally reach somewhere between 30-40 lbs. This increase in weight can create spinal misalignment and/or postural distortions, which in turn affect nerves, muscles and mobility of joints. As the bulk of this weight is deposited in the abdominal area, the mother's center of gravity shifts forward. In order to compensate, the natural curves of the spine, particularly in the lumbar region, become exaggerated causing "low back pain".

The hips may also expand laterally to help stabilize the body, putting pressure on the sacroiliac joints. The hormones of pregnancy cause muscles, ligaments, cartilage (such as the pubic symphysis), and even bones to "soften" and become more pliable. Pelvic bones "slip" and can become more easily displaced and/or fixated. In addition, certain round ligaments attach to pelvic bones and then to the uterus as it enlarges with the growth of the baby. When these ligaments are strained or torqued, as with sudden movement or "rolling over", they can cause even more discomfort for the pregnant mother.

Benefits of Prenatal Chiropractic Care

Chiropractic care can:

1. Correct vertebral misalignment and relieve pressure with gentle and effective adjustments.

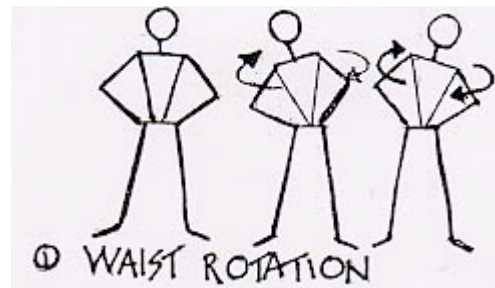
2. Help ensure that pelvic bones are properly aligned, facilitating a quicker, easier delivery.
3. Re-establish the natural position and mobility of the joints.
4. Provide freedom from interference of normal nerve energy, which is vital for the development of a healthy baby and mother.

SPINAL EXERCISES

The following exercises are simple, effective ways to help maintain healthy spinal mobility and alignment during pregnancy. Remember that breathing is an integral part of all stretching and that regular practice achieves the best results.

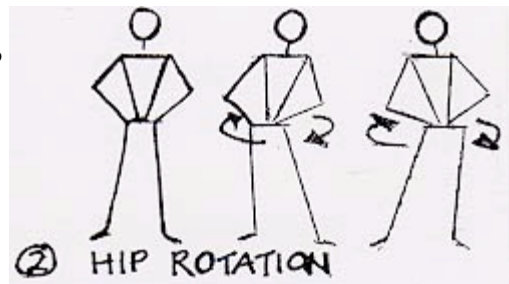
1. WAIST ROTATION:

STAND WITH HANDS ON WAIST, FEET ABOUT A SHOULDER'S WIDTH APART. BEND FORWARD SLIGHTLY FROM THE WAIST AND ROTATE UPPER BODY SEVERAL TIMES CLOCKWISE-THEN SEVERAL TIMES FROM COUNTER -CLOCKWISE. KEEP HIPS STATIONERY.



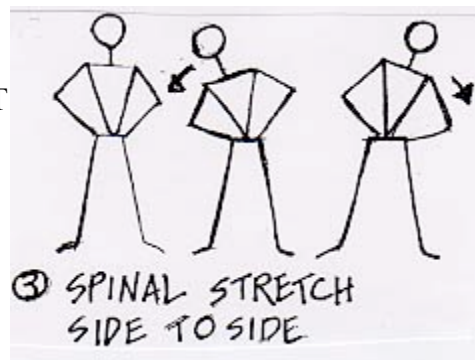
2. HIP ROTATION:

SAME STARTING POSITION AS WAIST ROTATION. THIS TIME, KEEP UPPER BODY AS STATIONERY AS POSSIBLE AND ROTATE HIPS SEVERAL TIMES CLOCKWISE-THEN SEVERAL TIMES COUNTER -CLOCKWISE.



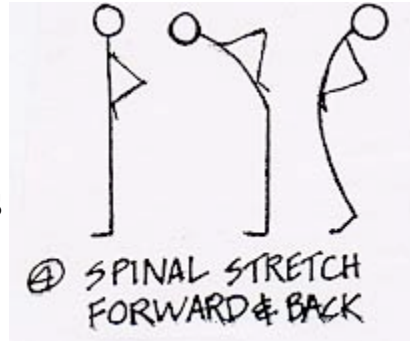
3. SPINAL STRETCH-SIDE TO SIDE:

SAME STARTING POSITION AS WAIST ROTATION AND HIP ROTATION. WITHOUT MOVING THE HIPS BEND AT THE WAIST AS FAR AS YOU CAN COMFORTABLY, FIRST TO THE LEFT, THEN TO THE RIGHT. REPEAT SEVERAL TIMES.



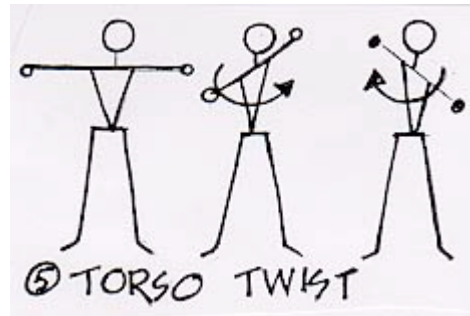
4. SPINAL STRETCH-FORWARD AND BACK:

PLACE FINGERS AT THE BASE OF THE SPINE-FINGERS OF THE LEFT HAND TO THE LEFT OF THE SPINE, FINGERS OF THE RIGHT HAND TO THE RIGHT OF THE SPINE. BEND FORWARD SLIGHTLY FROM THE WAIST. NOW GENTLY BEND SPINE BACKWARD, PUSHING FORWARD WITH THE FINGERS AS YOU DO SO, AND RAISING HEELS OFF THE GROUND. NOW MOVE YOUR FINGERS A LITTLE AS YOU DO SO, AND RAISING HEELS OFF THE GROUND. NOW, MOVE YOUR FINGERS A LITTLE UP THE SPINE AND REPEAT THE PROCESS SEVERAL TIMES, MOVING UP THE SPINE AS YOU DO. CONTINUE UNTIL YOU'VE GONE AS FAR UP THE SPINE AS YOU CAN.



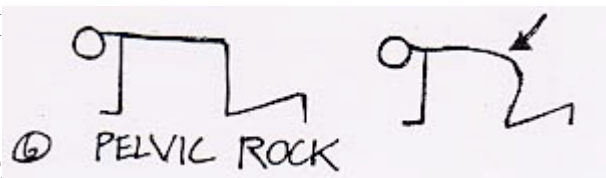
5. **TORSO-TWIST:**

STAND WITH FEET ABOUT A SHOULDER'S WIDTH APART, ARMS EXTENDED TO THE SIDES. KEEPING THE ARMS EXTENDED, TWIST FROM THE WAIST UP ONLY FIRST TO THE LEFT AND THEN TO THE RIGHT. REPEAT SEVERAL TIMES. BE SURE TO LOOK IN THE DIRECTION IN WHICH YOU ARE TURNING.



6. **PELVIC ROCK:**

GET ON HANDS AND KNEES KEEPING A FLAT BACK WITH THE SPINE PARALLEL TO THE FLOOR. GENTLY TENSE THE LOWER ABDOMINAL MUSCLES AND SQUEEZE THE



BUTTOCKS, ROCKING THE PELVIS FORWARD AND TILTING THE PUBIC BONE TOWARDS THE CHIN. HOLD THIS POSITION, FEELING THE STRETCH ALONG THE LOWER BACK AND SACRAL AREAS. RELEASE AND RETURN TO FLAT BACK POSITION. REPEAT 10-20 TIMES WITH CONCENTRATION. THIS EXERCISE PRACTICED DAILY HELPS STABILIZE RATHER PELVIS, CORRECT HYPERLORDOSIS OF THE LUMBAR REGION (SWAY BACK), AND ALLEVIATES LOW-BACK PAIN.