

Back care for parents

The body changes a great deal during pregnancy often leading to back and joint pain. The pain doesn't always go away once the baby is born. Back and joint pain may come on after you take your baby home. I am a physiotherapist and I see mums with children of varying ages for neck and back pain. I have called the article "Back care for parents" as many of the pains could easily be sustained by other parents as they share some of the duties of bringing up a child.

After delivery mums are more susceptible to experiencing back pain. To allow for birth, the mum's body carries the hormone relaxin, this stays in the system for several months after delivery. This hormone softens the ligaments to allow the body to give birth. The softened ligament leaves mums susceptible to back and joint injuries as they care for their newborn.

Newborns

Caring for a new child involves sitting for long periods to feed, bending forward to change nappies and bathe, leaning forward to babies in and out of prams and cots, lifting prams and carriers and a general increase in duties around the house

6 – 12 months

During these months, the baby is heavier and starts to eat solids. Parents find themselves sitting forward in chairs to feed, carry babies on hips. As baby is moving around on the floor parents lean forward to play and pick the baby and toys up from the floor.

Crawlers to walking

There are many different types of back conditions, all of which can cause back pain. These include soft tissue injuries, disc problems, postural stress, sciatica, structural problems, disease and fracture.

Once the baby tries to walk parents find themselves leaning forward as the babies try to walk. Parents lean forward to push babies around on trikes and pushers and generally pick up bigger children and more toys off the floor.

The causes of back pain

- Poor posture for a long period of time (breastfeeding, feeding solids).
- Repeatedly moving into or staying in a forward position (bathing baby, patting baby, leaning into a cot, leaning forward to play with baby on the floor, pushing a trike, learning to ride a bike).
- Lifting something too heavy or too often (prams, children, toys).
- Lack of exercise

What can we do?

- Ensure that we sit in comfortable chairs with good back support, particularly when feeding.
- When feeding solids ensure that we sit with back support and the back is twisted.
- Avoid prolonged forward movements. Bend the knees and move down close to the activity rather than move from the back.
- Avoid sudden and repetitive movements.
- Lift correctly, bend knees, keep the back straight, hold the object close to your body.
- Keep work surfaces at waist hip height.
- Alternate sitting and standing jobs.
- Maintain regular exercise, go for walks, swim or join an exercise group.

Mailing address:
125 Blake Street
East Reservoir VIC 3073

T (03) 8470 1111
F (03) 8470 1107
E info@yourcommunityhealth.org.au

Pre-schoolers

With the bigger/older children, parents find themselves leaning forward as they teach children to dress themselves and do up shoe laces. (The worst is the prolonged forward movement needed to teach a child to ride a bike without training wheels).

Many back problems improve by themselves. If they do not you can seek help through your local doctor or a physiotherapist.

Contact us

Contact us on (03) 8470 1111 to make an appointment.

Mums with new babies under 12 months old are seen as a priority. If you are experiencing pain and it is hard to care for your child so we will endeavour to see you as soon as possible.

Author: Penny Janezic, Physiotherapist, Your Community Health

References:

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

www.completefitness.com.au/articles/prepostnatal/pregnancybackpain.php

