Managing Set-Backs in Women's Health Conditions: Obstetrics

If you are experiencing a flare up in your symptoms this can be frustrating but don't worry. Set-backs are common, even when symptoms have been generally improving. Here are a few tips to help with your symptoms during or after your pregnancy.

- **Pacing**
  - During a set-back you may have to adjust your level of activity and not push yourself to do too much. Equally do not resort to complete rest. Prioritise your list of tasks. This helps to avoid the 'Boom and Bust' which otherwise leads to more frequent set-backs.
  - You will need to pace your activity more as you are nearing your delivery date.
  - Consider have you been doing more in your daily activities to make your symptoms worse e.g. more walking than usual, more or heavier lifting?
  - In preparation for your new arrival, have you been cleaning more, shopping more or decorating?
  - After delivery it can be difficult to pace yourself as you care for your baby - but get and accept as much help as you can.
  - After the birth of your baby try to organise your day to allow for rest periods (e.g. rest when your baby sleeps). Reduce strenuous physical activity (e.g. hoovering and shopping) as much as possible until your body adjusts over time.
- **Posture**
  - Try and have a good posture when going about your daily activities.
  - Consider have you been adopting unusual postures in sitting or standing (e.g standing with more weight on one leg, sitting with your legs to the side).
  - Have you been in the same posture for a long time (e.g. sitting at a desk).
  - When caring for your baby it is a challenge to maintain good postures.
    - Use a pillow to support your low back and another on your lap under your baby when feeding so your baby is lifted to you rather than you bending towards them, which strains the back.
    - Using a high changing unit rather than changing baby on the floor will reduce strain on your back.

compassionate care

- **Exercise**

  - Your physiotherapist will have prescribed a set of exercises to help you manage your condition. It is recommended you build this into your routine so they become part of your normal day. If your set-back means you are unable to perform certain exercises due to the pain, select easier ones until you can resume your normal routine.

- **Pelvic floor exercises**

  - You need to perform these exercises daily, progressing as instructed by your therapist and continue to do them indefinitely to maintain the strength in the muscles.

  - It will also be beneficial to try to contract your pelvic floor muscles with daily activities e.g. whilst turning in bed, whilst getting out of a car or standing from a chair.

- **Deep abdominal exercises**

  - Aim to contract the deep abdominal muscles by drawing in your belly button and lower abdominal muscles. Practice doing this exercise during daily activities.

  - **Heat** - The use of heat can help with pain and muscle relaxation. Use a warm water bottle, or microwavable wheat bag, following the instructions provided when you purchased it. To protect your skin from heat burns, wrap the item in a few layers of towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish. ****DO NOT** use heat anywhere around your pregnancy bump, but it is fine to use on your back.****

  - **Cold** - The use of ice can help with pain and inflammation and is particularly helpful with pain at the symphysis pubis. Use crushed ice cubes or a bag of frozen peas. Protect the skin from an ice burn by placing the ice pack in a wet towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish.

  - It's normal for the skin to become pink with either heat or ice, however if you experience discomfort or a burning sensation remove the item immediately. Don't apply heat or ice packs if you have poor skin sensation or poor circulation, if you are diabetic or over areas of infection.

- **Mental Health**

  - Look after your mental health. Being anxious or stressed will often make the pain worse, so it can help to use relaxation techniques to release muscle tension and anxiety. Consider hobbies or activities that help to distract from the pain. Stay connected to friends and family.

If after trying all the above tips you are still requiring further support please phone **01484 712515** to book an appointment with a specialist Women's Health Physiotherapist.

Cauda Equina Syndrome

Many patients have a combination of back pain, leg pain, leg numbness and weakness. These symptoms can be distressing for you but don't necessarily require emergency medical attention. A rare but serious back condition, Cauda Equina Syndrome, can lead to permanent damage or disability and will need to be seen by an Emergency Specialist Spinal Team.

Below are some warning signs of Cauda Equina Syndrome:

- Loss of feeling/pins and needles between your inner thighs and genitals.
- Numbness in or around your back passage or buttocks.
- Altered feeling when using toilet paper to wipe yourself.
- Increasing difficulty when you try to urinate.
- Loss of sensation when you pass urine.
- Not knowing when your bladder is either full or empty.
- Inability to stop a bowel movement or leaking.
- Loss of sensation when you pass a bowel motion.
- Loss of sensation in genitals during sexual intercourse.

If you have any combination of these symptoms, you must seek help immediately, either:

- Contact your GP for urgent advice.
- Call 111 for urgent advice.

or

- Attend your nearest Accident and Emergency department.

For further advice and guidance please visit:

www.cht.nhs.uk/services/clinical-services/physiotherapy-outpatients/patient-careinformation/womens-health

If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :

Physiotherapy Department
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary

Telephone: 01484 342434

MSK physiotherapy Admin Office: 01484 905380

www.cht.nhs.uk

If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور فارمیٹ یا زبان میں درکار ہوں، تو برائے مہربانی مندرجہ بالا شعبے میں ہم سے رابطہ کریں.

"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"