

Pregnancy and Low Back Pain

- Congratulations on your pregnancy!
- These techniques and stretches are options for you and your partner to target low back pain and should not cause pain or discomfort in any way. They can also be beneficial for other difficulties such as depression and sleep disturbance.
- Before you try them, discuss this packet with the healthcare provider who is guiding your pregnancy.

Cat Cow Pose

Your hands should be under your shoulders and knees under your hips. Breath out slowly as you move into cat pose.

Breath in slowly as you move into cow pose. Repeat 5-10 times 2-3 times per day.



Gentle Hands On Assistance

Gently massage the muscles on either side of her spine.

Place one hand on her tailbone and one on her low back. Apply very light pressure towards her spine and gently separate your hands as if you are creating space in between her low back and tailbone. Hold for 2-5 minutes.



Hip Openers

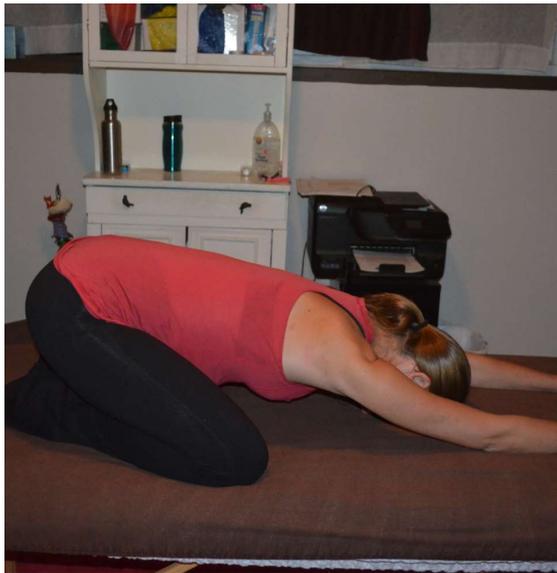
Psoas stretch – in this picture, her left psoas is being stretched. The pillow is placed under her left side to prevent her from lying directly on her back. Hold for 2-3 minutes if comfortable. Support the dangling foot on a chair or stool if the stretch is too intense/uncomfortable.



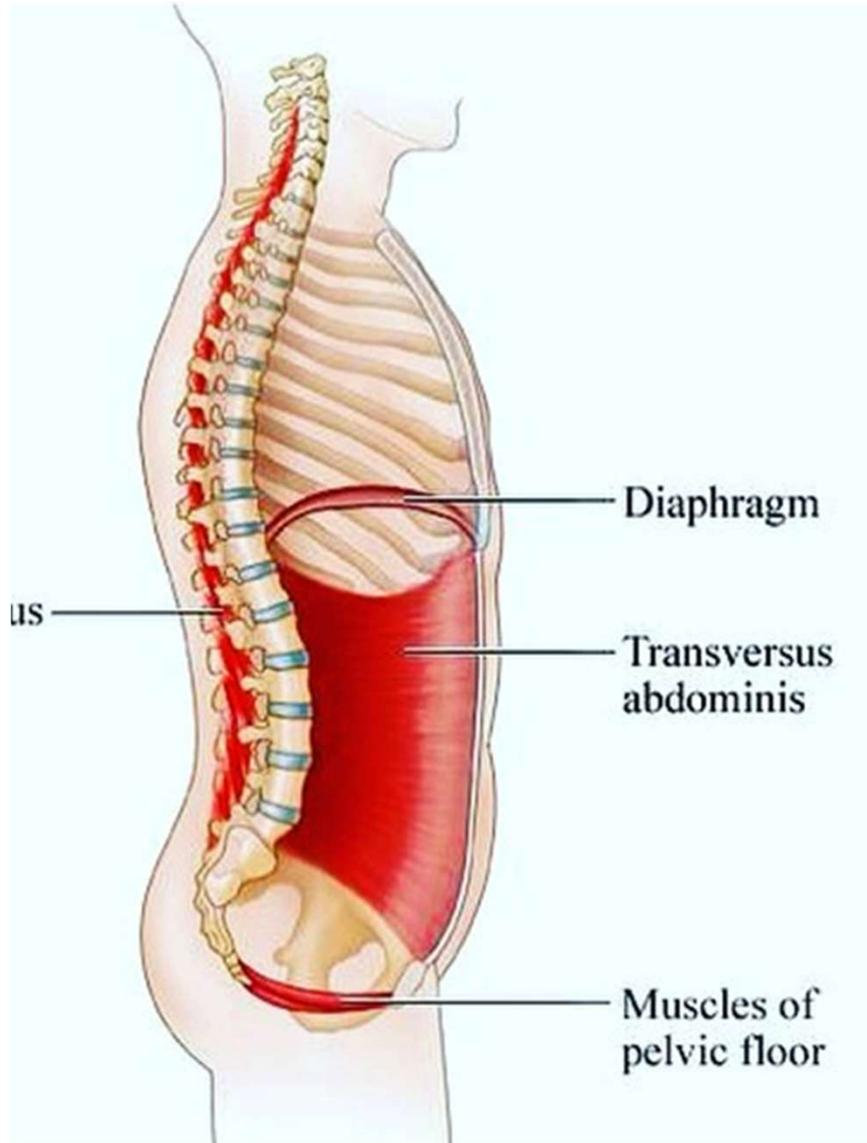
Groin stretch – spread your knees with your elbows. Hold for at least 30 seconds.



Child's Pose



- Take some slow deep breaths and soften into this stretch which is beneficial for lots of places such as your shoulders, low back, hips, knees, ankles, etc. Hold for at least 30 seconds or longer (2-3 minutes) as long as it feels good.



Core Muscles



Piston Breathing

The "core" are the muscles that surround your midsection and generate power and stability for the rest of your body. Top (diaphragm), bottom (pelvic floor), front (transverse abdominis), and back (multifidus). Here is a simple exercise to 1. get your core to start kicking in 2. get comfortable with one of the basic building blocks of a core strengthening program and 3. engage the muscles that help prevent incontinence, low back pain, hemorrhoids, and vaginal tearing during childbirth. "Common" and "normal" are different. Incontinence or leaking urine is common especially after childbirth or pelvic surgeries (such as prostate) but it doesn't have to be normal. The italicized parts are the actions (important parts) and the non-italicized are the mechanisms.

Piston Breathing

- Lie in a reclined position (avoid lying flat on your back) with your knees bent and your feet on the ground. You can also try sitting.
- *Take a few slow, easy breaths, breathing in through your nose and out through pursed lips (like you are slowly blowing out a candle).*
- As you breath in, the diaphragm lowers towards your feet. *This causes your belly to rise towards the ceiling and the bottom of your rib cage to expand like an umbrella (imagine your diaphragm lowering and pushing all your organs down, which causes the belly to expand). If you notice your chest rising, focus on only allowing your belly to move.*
- As you breath out, the diaphragm rises towards your head, back to its starting position. *This causes your belly to fall back towards the ground and that umbrella at the bottom of your rib cage to slowly close.*

Piston Breathing

- After you get comfortable with the breathing above, add the pelvic floor muscles. These muscles work with the diaphragm, so they lower when the diaphragm lowers and rise when the diaphragm rises. You contract your pelvic floor muscles, which will happen on the exhale, by imagining that you're stopping the flow of urine in midstream.
- *So, as you breath in, your belly rises and rib cage expands while you slowly relax the pelvic floor.*
- *As you breath out, your belly falls back towards the ground and you slowly contract the pelvic floor.*
- As you practice breathing, notice tension you may be holding in any area of your body (buttocks, abs, neck, shoulders, etc.) and let those areas soften.
- Practicing this breathing for 5-10 minutes per day, in a quiet space with no interruptions, will help improve your use of the diaphragm, pelvic floor, and core. Its also helpful for relieving stress and unnecessary tension.

References

- Is pregnancy related pelvic girdle pain associated with altered kinematic, kinetic, and motor control of the pelvis? A systematic review. Aldabe D, Milosavljevic S, Bussey D. Eur Spine J. 2012 Sep; 21(9): 1777-87.
- Non-pharmacological interventions for sleep quality and insomnia during pregnancy: A systematic review. Hollenbach D, Broker R, Herlehy S, Stuber K. J Can Chiropr Assoc. 2013 Sep; 57(3): 260-70.
- Pregnancy-related pelvic girdle pain and its relationship with relaxin levels during pregnancy: a systematic review. Aldabe D, Ribiero DC, Milosavljevic S, Bussey M. Eur Spine J. 2012 Sep; 21(9): 1769-76.
- Prenatal depression effects and interventions: a review. Field T, Diego M, Hernandez-Reif M. Infant Behav Dev. 2010 Dec; 33(4): 409-18.
- Pelvic floor muscle training for prevention and treatment of urinary and faecal incontinence in antenatal and postnatal women. Boyle R, Hay-Smith EJ, Cody JD, Morkved S. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2012 Oct 17;10:CD007471.
- Juliewiebept.com for more info on piston breathing and other pre and post-pregnancy – related pain matters.