



Hip pain in pregnancy: Greater trochanteric pain syndrome (GTPS)

Many women experience pain around the outer thigh or hip area during pregnancy. This is known as ‘greater trochanteric pain syndrome or GTPS (previously called ‘trochanteric bursitis’).

This leaflet gives some advice, stretches and exercises aimed to help you manage and treat the pain.

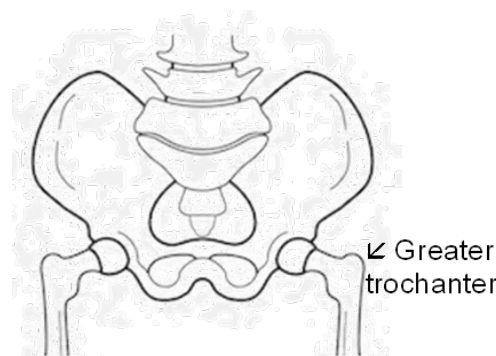
What is greater trochanteric pain syndrome?

The pain is usually around the bony prominence (greater trochanter) at the top of the thigh bone (femur).

As your baby grows and your abdomen gets larger, you will not be able to sleep on your back or front and you will find it most comfortable to lie on your side. However, this puts pressure on the greater trochanter and can irritate the area, leading to pain.

In people who are not pregnant, GTPS is usually self-limiting and goes away on its own within a few months.

However, in pregnancy, the load applied to the hip area from constant lying on your side increases as your baby grows bigger.



What can I do to help ease the pain?

- If your pain is in one hip, try to sleep on the opposite side for part of the night to offload the painful hip as much as possible. Put a pillow between your knees to prevent the painful leg from crossing over and falling forward.
- Use a pregnancy pillow to support your bump when lying on your side.
- When standing, stand straight and do not ‘lean’ on one hip.
- Try not to cross your legs when sitting.
- Applying ice wrapped in a tea towel to the area for 10-15 minutes every couple of hours can help to decrease pain and inflammation.
- If you have other children, do not carry them on the sore hip.
- Try the stretches and exercises below. These will stretch tight areas and strengthen the muscles around your hip, thereby taking some of the pressure off the sore region.

Stretches

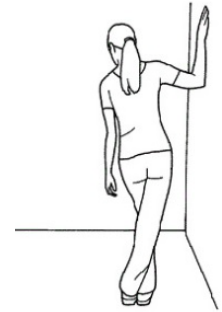
1. Piriformis stretch

- Place your ankle on the opposite knee, and then lean forward until you feel a stretch in the side of your bottom.
- Hold the stretch for 30 seconds.
- Repeat on the other leg.
- Repeat 3 times per day.



2. ITB (iliotibial band) stretch

- Stand near the wall and cross the painful leg behind the good leg.
- Then lean away from the wall until you feel a stretch down the side of the painful leg.
- Hold for 30 seconds.
- Repeat 3 times per day.



3. Back stretch (lumbar rotation)

- Lie down with your knees up and feet flat on the bed, and arms outstretched to the sides.
- Gently roll your knees to one side until you feel a stretch.
- Hold for 30 seconds.
- Repeat on the other side.
- Repeat both sides 3 times per day.



Exercises

1. Standing hip abduction

- Stand with one hand on the back of a chair or other stable surface.
- Lift the painful leg out to the side, hold for 5 seconds, and then bring the leg back.
- Repeat this 10 times, 3 times per day.
- When it begins to get easier, increase the number of seconds you are holding.



2. Hip stability (against wall)

- Stand with your painful leg away from the wall.
- Lift your good leg to around 90 degrees and push it against the wall. You will feel the hip muscles in the painful leg start to contract.
- Hold for 30 seconds.
- Repeat 5 times, 3 times per day.



3. Bridges

- Lie down with your knees up and feet flat on the floor.
- Lift your bottom up and hold for 10 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times, 3 times per day.



4. Clams (do this on both sides)

- Lie on one side, knees bent.
- Keeping your ankles together, raise the top knee towards the ceiling.
- Be careful not to roll backwards, keep your hips on top of each other.
- Repeat 10 times on both sides, 3 times per day.



5. Side leg raises (do this on both sides)

- Lie on your side, legs straight.
- Raise the top leg towards the ceiling, and hold for 5 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times, on both legs, 3 times per day.



6. Wall squats

- Stand leaning against a wall.
- Slowly bend your knees and “slide” your back down the wall until you are in a squat position.
- Hold for 10 seconds.
- Repeat 10 times, 3 times per day.



Ask your midwife or the physiotherapist for help if you are not sure of how to do any of the exercises or movements.

Pictures courtesy of Physio Tools[©]

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Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

J Churches, Pelvic Health & Maternity Physiotherapy, December 2021

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Next review due: December 2025

Our Maternity Strategy and Vision

'Working together with women, birthing people and families to offer compassionate, supportive care and informed choice; striving for equity and excellence in our maternity service.'

You can read our maternity strategy here

