

Meralgia paraesthetica in pregnancy

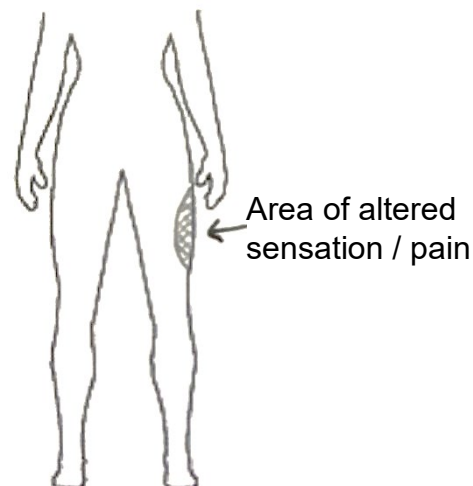
This leaflet gives you information, advice and exercises if you are experiencing pain or numbness on the outside of your thigh during pregnancy. If you have any questions, please speak to your physiotherapist.

What is meralgia paraesthetica?

Meralgia paraesthetica is pain and/or numbness in the lateral (outside) part of the thigh. It usually occurs on one side.

It is caused by a nerve that runs through the groin and into the thigh becoming compressed (squashed). This nerve is called the lateral femoral cutaneous nerve (LFCN). Nerves send signals to and from the brain, and some nerves (called sensory nerves) tell the brain about sensations in the skin, muscles and other tissues. The LFCN is a sensory nerve. As your baby/babies grow during pregnancy, the increasing weight of your uterus (womb) presses on this nerve, and this is what causes the symptoms.

The nerve can also be compressed by clothing that is too tight, or by wearing something heavy around the waist area, such as a tool belt.



What does it feel like?

Meralgia paraesthetica can produce the following symptoms:

- Tingling, numbness, burning or stabbing pain on the outside of the thigh
- Increased pain when lying on the affected side
- Sensitivity to light touch and different textures in the affected area
- Sensitivity to heat and cold in the affected area
- Standing or walking for long periods makes the pain worse

What can I do to help myself?

Symptoms usually go away once you have given birth and there is no longer extra weight pressing on your groin area. In the meantime, you may find these stretches, exercises and tips helpful:

- Always wear loose clothing, and try not to wear a belt.
- Avoid standing or walking for too long.
- Use a pregnancy pillow, and try to avoid lying or sleeping on the affected side.

Stretching exercises

Hip stretch 1:

Lie down with your legs over the edge of the bed. Bend the knee of the unaffected leg and bring it up towards your chest, leaving the sore leg hanging over the edge of the bed. You will feel a stretch over the lower tummy and hip of the leg that is hanging.

Hold the stretch for at least 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times per day.

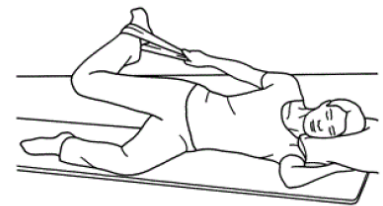


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Hip stretch 2:

Lie on your unaffected side with your knees bent. Put a towel around your top ankle (the sore leg). Hold the towel and pull the ankle towards your buttock. Keep your hip straight and do not arch your back. You should feel a stretch in the front of your hip/groin.

Hold for at least 30 seconds. Repeat 3 times per day.



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Nerve glide:

Stand inside an open doorway, so that you will have a doorframe to reach for. Lift the arm on the affected side up and over your head, stretching your side, and reaching for the opposite side of the doorframe. At the same time, bend the sore leg and reach for the ankle behind you with the opposite hand. Once you have touched both the ankle and doorframe, release both and come back to starting position.

Repeat a minimum of 10 times, 3 times per day.



Strengthening exercises

Wide bridge:

Lie down on your back, with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor, keeping your feet wide apart. Put your arms by your sides. Pull your tummy button back towards your spine (engage your core), squeeze your bottom muscles and slowly lift your bottom off the floor. Hold for 10 seconds, then slowly lower back down. Repeat 10 times, 3 times per day.



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Clams:

Lie down on your side with one leg on top of the other, bending your hips and knees. Keeping your ankles together, raise the top knee up and then back down.

Be careful not to roll backwards; keep your hips level. Repeat 10 times, then swap sides. Repeat both legs 3 times per day.



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Further information

POGP https://thepogp.co.uk/patient_information/default.aspx

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

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

Jenni Churches (Pelvic Health and Maternity Physio), June 2021

Review due: July 2023

Next review due: July 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



Compassionate

Aspirational

Resourceful

Excellent