



Posture & Alignment during Pregnancy

During pregnancy it will be beneficial from the start to develop and/or maintain balanced neutral posture and alignment during your daily functions. Pregnancy alters your posture dramatically, for example it may increase the curve in your lower back from the weight of baby, causing back pain among other things. Changes in alignment can affect the body in different ways, causing all sorts of aches, pains and dysfunctions. Although there is no such thing as 'perfect posture', improvements in posture such as keeping your ribs stacked over your pelvis allows for better function of your body, including but not limited to pelvic floor function. Your core control, strength and function will be of utmost importance to support optimal posture and alignment.

Some of the key benefits of maintaining optimal posture are:

- Gives baby more room to grow: This will reduce the strain on you and you will carry your pregnancy easier. Poor posture reduces space your baby has to move and can cause excess tightening of some muscle groups which can continue to worsen posture.
- Reduces abdominal separation (diastasis recti, a normal occurrence towards the end of pregnancy). Keeping a neutral posture and reducing an excessive arch in your lower back will help keep your abdominal separation smaller (don't flatten your back though, keep a gentle arch)
- Reduces lower back, pelvic, neck, shoulder and other aches and pains. Try to maintain a gentle curve in your lower back, an excessive curve and sticking your belly out will put extra strain on your back, weaken your back muscles and tighten your thigh muscles.
- Improves baby positioning and therefore birth outcomes
- Improves postnatal recovery, optimal pregnancy posture with good muscle balance and strength will give you a head start in your postnatal recovery as you gently rebuild your pelvic floor and core foundational strength

Maintaining a strong core and continuing with an achievable level of pregnancy safe exercise and strength training throughout your pregnancy will help support a good posture.

Tips to help your posture:

- Regularly think about your posture but move through a variety of movements daily creating movement and stability.
- When sitting, sit with a neutral curve in your lower back, don't tuck your butt under and flatten your back. Try tucking a rolled up towel at the back under your tailbone to support this position.
- Don't grip and tighten your upper abdominals, this is common as a way of trying to 'flatten our abs' but in fact it does the opposite, it pushes your stomach contents down causing that 'lower abdominal pooch/mummy tummy' type look. This is putting pressure on the front of your core, increasing the risk of a more severe abdominal separation and pelvic floor dysfunction from the pressure.
- Relax your glutes; Your pelvis needs to be mobile and stable and flexible not tight and tense. Constantly tight glutes can inhibit them from working effectively, and cause pelvic floor tension, pelvic pain and back pain.
- Get your breathing patterns right, breath in and down into your abdominal cavity not up into your chest and shoulders. Relax your core and relax your shoulders.
- Keep your chest down, don't flare out your lower chest.
- Keep your ribs and pelvis mobile
- Imagine you are being pulled up tall by a ponytail on top of your head.
- Avoid standing on one foot or weighted to one side.
- Avoid sitting with legs crossed

Enjoy the benefits of a strong pregnancy posture

Aim for keeping shoulders and ribs stacked over top of pelvis as in the middle picture, your core will function better and your body will feel so much better for it.

