SUMMER USHERS IN BABY SEASON

Physical therapists provide relief from common pregnancy and postpartum woes

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July 1, 2010  erinwendel@apta.org
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ALEXANDRIA, VA – Summer is not only characterized by rising temperatures, it is also the season for the most births in the United States, particularly during July. It is estimated that virtually all women experience some degree of musculoskeletal discomfort during pregnancy, and 25% have at least temporarily disabling symptoms. During “baby season,” the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is educating pregnant and postpartum moms about health conditions that can arise during those periods, including low back pain (LBP) and stress urinary incontinence (SUI).

To educate moms and moms-to-be, APTA will hold a tweet chat on July 13 from 1 to 2 p.m. EST to answer questions about LBP, SUI and a variety of other conditions that can result from pregnancy and that physical therapists can treat. Care by a physical therapist can be critical in preventing and treating these conditions since the type and amount of treatments that can be applied during these periods is limited.

“The prenatal and postpartum periods are a time of great change for women physically, emotionally, and hormonally, and musculoskeletal pain and dysfunction is common. But you don’t have to grit your teeth and bear it,” said APTA Media Corps member Jill Boissonnault, PT, PhD, WCS.

Low Back Pain

According to one study, LBP affects approximately 50% of pregnant women, forcing nearly 30% of those women to stop performing at least one daily activity over the course of their pregnancies. LBP is also reported in 30% to 45% of women during the postpartum period.

Depending on a woman’s specific needs, treatment by a physical therapist typically focuses on reducing discomfort and maintaining function during pregnancy. This may involve recommendations for sleeping positions, exercises to help postural alignment and body balance, exercises to improve strength, mobility and flexibility, and bracing for lower back support.

Boissonnault stresses that, “patients who are experiencing low back pain that is preventing them from performing normal daily activities during or after pregnancy should seek the expert advice of a physical therapist.”

Stress Urinary Incontinence

While there are different types of urinary incontinence, SUI most commonly affects pregnant and postpartum women. This often under-reported and untreated condition is characterized by involuntary leakage of urine upon effort, exertion, or physical activity. A 2009 study found that SUI affects up to 67% of women during pregnancy and as many as 38% of women during the 3 months following delivery.”

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“Stress urinary incontinence has a severe impact on women emotionally and physically and often impacts women’s ability to exercise. This condition can in itself affect women’s health across their lifespan,” says APTA Member Ruth Maher, PT, DPT, WCS.

To help pregnant and postpartum women regain control over their lives and their bladders, physical therapists design individualized treatment plans, which may include exercises to strengthen the pelvic muscles and advice on how to change behaviors that contribute to incontinence.

“Many women feel that stress urinary incontinence is inevitable postpartum and is a normal part of aging,” said Maher. “I believe this misconception deters women from speaking with their health care providers regarding their incontinence.”

Research has shown that physical therapy has a success rate of more than 80% for individuals with SUI. Additionally, those who engage in physical therapy-led targeted exercise programs for the pelvic floor muscles during pregnancy are less likely to report urinary incontinence late in their pregnancy.\(^5\)\(^-\)\(^6\)\(^-\)\(^7\)

Physical therapists educated in the area of women’s health have extensive knowledge about women’s health issues in all stages of life, from childbearing years through the post menopausal period. Visit www.moveforwardpt.com to find a physical therapist in your area and to learn more about these conditions and others that physical therapists treat. As experts in mobility and motion, physical therapists can reduce or eliminate a person’s need for surgery or the long-term use of prescription medications and their side effects, in many cases.

To submit a question related to this topic to be answered by a physical therapist specializing in women’s health please visit, www.moveforwardpt.com/ask-a-pt.

#MOVEPT Tweet Chat
Join APTA for an interactive, live discussion with Jennifer Chu, MS, PT, a physical therapist specializing in women’s health. Jennifer has become a renowned professional in the Washington Metropolitan Area for the treatment of all types of pelvic floor dysfunctions and other women’s health issues. She has been instructing in all levels of continuing education classes as a teaching assistant for pregnancy issues. Dina Freeman, will serve as the tweet chat moderator. She is the mother of two little boys, and an independent public relations consultant for a leading parenting website, BabyCenter. Dina shares responsibility for the voice of the Twitter handle @BabyCenter. Additionally, Dina blogs at both BabyCenter.com and The Pursuit of Cute. Register using EventBrite: http://bit.ly/aalREq. To join the chat, visit: http://tweetchat.com/room/MovePT. Simply login to Twitter and follow the hashtag: #MovePT.

About APTA
The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) represents more than 74,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and students of physical therapy nationwide. Learn more about conditions physical therapists can treat and find a physical therapist in your area at www.moveforwardpt.com. Consumers are encouraged to follow us on Twitter (@moveforwardpt) and become a fan on Facebook.

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About BabyCenter® LLC

BabyCenter® is the leading global resource for parents, reaching more than 78 percent of new and expectant moms online in the United States and 16 million parents monthly across 21 markets worldwide. BabyCenter has nurtured more than 100 million parents since its launch in 1997, providing a customized experience that blends trusted expert advice with mom-to-mom wisdom from preconception to age 8. As the voice of modern motherhood, BabyCenter is the go-to resource for 21st Century Mom™ insights. Through its unique combination of content and community, BabyCenter delivers award-winning stage-based content to parents via personalized home pages, e-mail newsletters, useful online and mobile tools, two popular parenting blogs (MOMformation™ and FAMEbaby™), and the BabyCenter Community. BabyCenter offers an exclusive set of industry-leading 3D animated videos about pregnancy and birth and a complete series of live birth videos with expert narration and commentary. Through its proprietary research and industry-leading mom panels, BabyCenter has helped some of the world's leading brands better understand how to market to moms. The site has received numerous prestigious awards, including six Webby Awards and two Mediapost OMMA Awards, and was listed on Advertising Age's 2008 Digital A-List. BabyCenter is available on the Internet in eight languages and has mobile applications in English, Spanish, and Hindi. BabyCenter LLC is based in San Francisco and is a member of the Johnson & Johnson family of companies. BabyCenter is a registered trademark of BabyCenter LLC.

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1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Health Statistics.


