



**Special Delivery** **The benefits of chiropractic during pregnancy.**

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After a miscarriage in 1987, I began to have irregular menstrual cycles and was unable to become pregnant. A patient of Dr. Peet's told me about chiropractic, so I decided to give it a try.

On May 27, 1988, I made my first visit to Dr. Peet. Aside from having headaches every day, my major complaint was my failure to become pregnant. My gynecologist had me on a drug which was supposed to make my cycles more regular, but it didn't work.

When I began seeing Dr. Peet, I really believed he could help me. It was the first time in almost one year that I felt confident that one day I would become pregnant. I believe that as I continue under his care, my pregnancy will be a healthy one and, I hope, after this pregnancy, I will see a big difference in my menstrual cycles.

Aside from achieving a much-wanted pregnancy, I have fewer headaches that I had prior to being under chiropractic care with Dr. Peet.

Marilyn Freeman, Vermont

While most of today's pregnant women are taking the necessary precautions to ensure the health of their unborn child, many fail to realize that although they may be eating right and exercising, they might not be satisfying all of their body's physical need.

Pregnancy is a natural condition and should be no more difficult than any other phase of life.

Before becoming pregnant, your body weight is centered over your pelvic area and hips. However, your center of gravity gradually shifts as the baby grows, allowing for most of your weight to be in front of the hips. This process leads to changes in the alignment of the spine.

During pregnancy many physiological and endocrinological changes take place for the purpose of creating an optimal environment for the developing baby.(1) This complex process involves every system of a pregnant woman's body. For example, her musculoskeletal systems may be affected by her extended abdomen and increased lower back curve.(2)

There may also be pelvic changes early on in the pregnancy due to the release of certain hormones. These hormones cause the ligaments to relax and soften, which together with increased synovial fluid widens the pelvic joints.(3) Since this increased mobility is not restricted only to the pelvis, it may be noticed in other joints and muscles as well.

As the uterus enlarges and expands forward, the center of gravity is displaced.(4) This could cause muscle cramps and nerve pain. These changes in posture put more strain on the lower back and pelvic areas, which may cause back pain to occur, particularly in the lower back.

After childbirth, the goal is to slowly return the spine to its pre-pregnancy alignment in an effort to prevent future back pain and injury. For this reason, it has been recommended that if not currently under chiropractic care, a pregnant woman should consider seeing a chiropractor.

Although obstetrics is a required course of study for all chiropractors, they do not deliver babies, so expectant mothers may not think of turning to them for spinal prenatal care.

However, a chiropractor is thoroughly trained to understand the mechanical and physical aspects of what may be causing unnecessary pain or discomfort during pregnancy. The importance of correcting the effects of spinal stress and postural distortions cannot be overemphasized.

If you go into your pregnancy with poor alignment, it may possibly get worse and set the stage for much discomfort during labor and a greater chance of difficulty during delivery. It is for this very reason that chiropractors urge expectant mothers to have their spine checked regularly throughout their pregnancy. The application of chiropractic adjustments during labor and delivery may significantly reduce pain, suffering and the use of

pain-relieving drugs. Chiropractic care during pregnancy has also been known to decrease both the labor and delivery times, making the last few hours of your pregnancy more comfortable.(5)

Having studied pregnancy and birth, a chiropractor knows that the extra weight you are carrying may cause postural distortions which may result in irritation to your Spine.(6) The correction of these distortions by a chiropractor may relieve these spinal irritations as well as unnecessary tension.

The way in which a chiropractor corrects this interference to the body, otherwise known as vertebral subluxation complex (VSC), is through chiropractic adjustments. VSC causes a neurological disturbance that may end up interfering with the communication system (brain and nervous system) of the body. Therefore, chiropractors use chiropractic adjustments to correct VSC, so that there is no disturbance to the communication system between the mother and her unborn child.(7)

Chiropractic adjustments are important for two reasons. First, they help insure that your pelvic bones are properly aligned for a quicker, easier delivery with less chance of injury to you and your child.(8) Secondly, these adjustments may unblock the normal energy which is vital for your child's healthy development.(9)

There are many different types of chiropractic techniques, some specifically designed for pregnancy. For example, there is an adjustment for turning breech babies called the Webster Technique, as well as other chiropractic adjustments designed primarily for adjusting newborn infants.

These adjustments are not harmful to a pregnant woman or her unborn baby; instead, they can be beneficial in maintaining the proper body alignment, nerve conduction and relaxation of the postural muscles.(10)

Chiropractic adjustments may also be helpful in reducing some of the common ailments of pregnancy, such as nausea, indigestion, headaches and muscle cramping, because of the direct effect on the central nervous system.(11)

All this is extremely important for the pregnant woman who needs to have her body as healthy and strong as possible in order to handle the strenuous pressures associated with pregnancy and childbirth. Therefore, these findings suggest that chiropractic can play an important role in prenatal care. Maintaining the proper body alignment is just as important as providing you and your baby with good nutrition and exercise.

Use your pregnancy to further educate yourself about the choices which lie ahead of you. Try listening to what your "inner voice" is telling you when making any decisions concerning both you and your unborn child. Simply put, let your own intuition, along with your expanded education, be your guide. Once you've taken the time to experience and understand the benefits of chiropractic during pregnancy, it will become apparent to you that it is a marriage that is meant to be.

And a word about children and chiropractic...

My son, Nathan, is almost six years old. Beginning at the age of nine months, he has suffered from recurring ear infections. At about the age of four, he also began suffering from incurring sinus infections. During the first five years, his treatments have consisted of having four sets of tubes inserted in his ears, having his adenoids and tonsils removed, having allergy tests, having his immune system tested, and taking hundreds of doses of various antibiotics, decongestants, steroids, nasal sprays, and other drugs. Prior to commencing chiropractic treatment, Nathan had finished his third round of antibiotics and still was sick with a sinus infection and an infection in his right ear. He had been coughing every day for approximately ten weeks. The circles under his eyes were very dark, and his general coloring was poor. We had consulted a pediatric otolaryngologist who recommended sinus surgery.

At this point, we sought chiropractic treatment for Nathan. After viewing his x-rays, his chiropractor, Dr. Janice Rappaport, told us that the rotation of the vertebrae in his neck was severe and one of the worst cases she had ever seen. Two weeks after Nathan began receiving treatment from Dr. Rappaport, he was examined by his pediatrician. We had already observed that his coughing had stopped and that his general coloring was much improved. The pediatrician's examination showed that the sinus infection and the infection in his right ear were gone! The only symptom that remained was some clear, thin fluid behind his right eardrum. We anticipate that this will also clear up with further treatment.

It is impossible to describe my feelings now - they are a combination of joy, relief and amazement. And how great to look at Nathan now and see a smiling, energetic little boy with pink cheeks!

Susan C. Jordan, Georgia

Case history excerpts from The Truth About Chiropractic, by Dr. Debra Levinson, 1992.

Notes:

(1.) Greenhill, J.P. Obstetrics, ed. 13, W.B. Saunders, Philadelphia, 1965; p. 183. (2.) Peet, J., "Chiropractic care during pregnancy," Chiropractic Pediatric & Prenatal Reference Manual, 2nd ed., The Baby Adjusters Publications, Vermont, 1992; p. 170. (3.) Hyttan, F.E., Chamberlain, G., Eds., Clinical Physiology in Obstetrics, Blackwell Scientific, Oxford, 1980; p. 165. (4.) Peet, J., Chiropractic Pediatric & Prenatal Reference Manual; p. 170. (5.) Webster, L.L., "Chiropractic care during pregnancy," Today's Chiropractic, vol. 11(3), 1991; p. 20. (6.) Altman, N., The Chiropractic Alternative, P.J. Tarcher Inc., Los Angeles, 1981; p.33. (7.) Peet, p. 170. (8.) Altman, p.33. (9.) Altman, p.33. (10.) Penna, M., "Pregnancy and Chiropractic Care, The ACA Journal of Chiropractic, vol. 26(11), 1989; p. 31-33. (11.) Peet, p. 170.

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