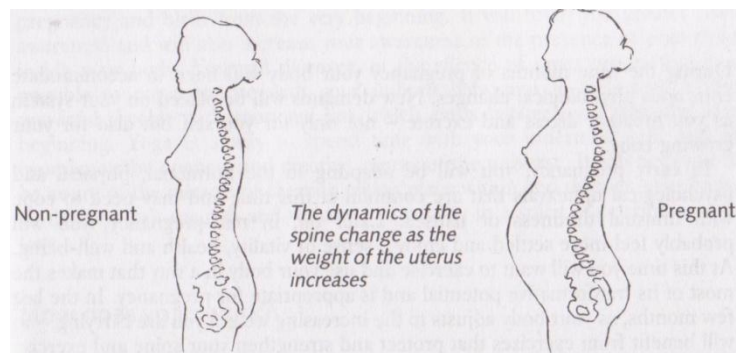


Posture and the Spine during Pregnancy

The spine, made up of a column of bony vertebrae separated by spongy discs which act as shock absorbers, has natural curves and is capable of a range of versatile movements. It supports the internal organs, your ribs and lungs as well as your head. The spine contains the spinal cord. It also controls all movement and helps to keep your body weight balanced.

During pregnancy, your spine must also support the weight of your growing uterus and its contents. As your baby grows, the natural curves of your spine will adjust to the additional weight in front of the body. A healthy spine can adapt to the demands of pregnancy, but many women experience poor posture and back pain, particularly in the lower back. This may be due to underlying imbalances or stiffness in the spine, or to the strains and stresses of everyday life. However, awareness of posture and practising certain yoga exercises can help to ease back pain and make the spine strong and flexible.



For good posture and greater awareness of your spine during pregnancy follow the instructions outlined below:

Stand with your **feet** approximately hip-width apart. If you're not sure what hip-width apart is, feel as if you're just letting your legs dangle from your hip joints. Feel the contact that your feet have with the mat – toes, balls, heels – and let the weight of your body sink down through the centre of your heels into the floor. Also place more weight on the outer edges of your feet. Feel that the **knees** are soft.

As your **lower back** caves in due to the growing weight of your baby, your **neck** also extends forward to compensate. So to correct this you will need to adjust the position of your **pelvis**. So roll your pelvis under, lengthening your lower back – place your hands on your lower back to guide you as you do this. Also be aware of the supporting role of your **abdominal muscles** in preventing forward pelvis tilt.

Drop your chin slightly and lengthen the back of your **neck**. Gently pull your **shoulders** back and open your chest. Lift your **chest** bone, as if trying to make space for your growing baby. Allow your arms to hang comfortably to the sides of the body.

Stand in stillness for a few moments. Feel your body. Feel the firm contact that the feet have with the floor. Be aware of the strength of your body in holding you upright – muscles in your legs and torso engaging. Visualise the spine and feel a sense of space between the individual vertebrae. Imagine that there is a small thread attached to the crown of your head pulling you gently upright, lengthening your spine.

Be aware of your **breathing**, natural and relaxed. Don't try to change it in any way. Feel as if you are breathing in from the base of the spine up to the top of the spine, and then breathing out back down again. As you breathe in feeling a sense of lightness in the body, as your breath out letting go, weight of your body sinking down into the floor.