



The Big Three of Prenatal Exercise

We see a lot of low back pain in our prenatal practice here at Sage and, of course, we're always happy to help. But, if you're willing to do a few home exercises yourself, you could provide an extra cushion against that pain that shows up in 80% of third trimester pregnancies. The foundation of your self-help consists of 3 parts: strengthening, stretching and postural awareness. In this post, I'll be discussing "The Big Three" of your strengthening program. The Big Three are pelvic tilts, kegels and squats.

Pelvic Tilts

After about 20 weeks, you should avoid sit-ups or "crunches"; but, pelvic tilts are fine to do and are a great way to strengthen your abdomen. You can start learning them well before 20 weeks by lying on your back with your knees bent and feet planted on the floor. If you slide a hand under the small of your back, you'll notice a space. Now contract your abdominal muscles and try to eliminate that space by bringing your back flat to the floor. To help feel that the appropriate muscles are contracting, you can put your hands on your abdomen. Think about bringing your pubic bones up towards the ceiling as your spine is pressing into the floor. Do several sets and hold the tilt for a bit. After 20 weeks, leave off lying on the back and do these on your hands and knees or even while standing in line at the grocery store. A strong abdomen will assist in supporting that ever-increasing load on the low back.



Kegels

The pelvic floor is the muscular sling that supports your bladder and uterus and bowel. Try pulling this muscle up and holding for a few seconds. You won't be able to hold it long at first; but, it will get stronger over time. This muscle can be hard to "find." A good way to do it is try to stop the flow of urine while urinating. Kegels can help make a strong pelvic floor to help you birth the baby and help prevent incontinence in late pregnancy when the baby is sitting low, as well as post-partum. You don't have to be pregnant to benefit from kegels; older women can benefit too. Healthy pelvic floors for every woman!

Squats

Stand with your back about a foot from a wall. Lean back against the wall and do a pelvic tilt so that your low back is flat against the wall. Now squat down so that your knees are approaching a 90 degree angle. Hang out until your legs start to fatigue. Come back up slowly. Do several sets. Squatting improves strength in legs and buttocks. It will help conquer low back pain and give you strong legs for labor and delivery.

The Big Three are a great start to a fit pregnancy.