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Low back pain during pregnancy

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Background & Aim: Pregnancy is a time of many physical and physiological changes. These changes impact the musculoskeletal system, which can develop a variety of problems (and pain in different locations). One of the most common is low back pain (LBP). Thus, the aim of this study is to review the pregnancy low back pain and its management.

Method: We conducted a PubMed and Cochrane search, on 25/05/2015, with the terms “lumbar/low back pain” and “pregnancy”, for systematic reviews and meta-analysis, published in the last 10 years. We identified 53 articles of which 8 were included, after reading the abstracts.

Results: Different studies found that LBP, in most cases, is due to mechanical factors, including altered posture, muscle weakness, joint laxity, and/or vertebral facet joint irritation. Disc herniation is a rare cause of LBP during pregnancy. LBP can occur at any time during the gestation, but is most prevalent in the second half of pregnancy. Usually, women describe pain that is aggravated by activity and relieved by rest. Physical examination is important to locate the pain and in differential diagnosis. Imaging study (magnetic resonance) should be performed only in particular cases. A multimodal approach is required and pharmacological intervention is only one of many different options to manage LBP.

Conclusions: LBP is a common cause of pain during pregnancy that interfere with the pregnant quality of life. Usually it's a benign condition but family doctors should be aware of this disorder so they can decide wisely and manage it appropriately.

No conflict of interest declared