

Can Pregnant Women Receive Chiropractic Care?

Pregnancy is a beautiful experience, and we all want to provide the best environment for both mom and baby. The question of whether or not chiropractic care is safe during pregnancy is frequently raised by the newly-expectant mother as she plans for a healthy pregnancy. Chiropractic care during the nine-month time frame is a common practice, as many moms require professional care for biomechanical complaints (most notably back pain) or they simply want to feel “their best.”

A “normal” pregnancy is defined as “about 40 weeks, ranging between 37 and 42 weeks from the point of fertilization to delivery.” It’s the “norm” NOT to know exactly when fertilization happens, so we typically calculate the expected gestation period from the point of the woman’s last normal menstrual period. During the first trimester (the three-month period starting on the first day of the last menstrual period through the thirteenth week), the fertilized egg implants into the womb. This period of time is usually asymptomatic unless morning sickness occurs. Because the mom is often unaware of being pregnant, medication use and alcohol intake should be carefully watched FROM THE MOMENT SHE STARTS TRYING TO BECOME PREGNANT!

During the second trimester (the fourteenth to the twenty-seventh week), most women feel GREAT! No more morning sickness, increased energy, and by now, fetal movements are a pleased sensation! Ultrasound during this time will be able to detect any problems, as well as identify the child’s sex.

The third trimester starts at the twenty-eighth week and finishes with the birth of the child. As the baby grows to fill the womb, the mom usually becomes more uncomfortable, especially in the last two to three weeks when the contractions begin that are needed to move the child down into the birth canal in preparation for birth. A vaginal delivery usually occurs within 24 hours of labor, and if labor does not occur by week 42, it may be induced by using medications that purposely initiate labor (such as pitocin).

With this as a foundation, chiropractic offers the pregnant mom many benefits. First regarding safety, a 2009 literature review found 33 references on this subject and concluded the results revealed a favorable outcome regarding the use and safety of chiropractic care throughout pregnancy. The authors concluded that chiropractic is a safe and effective means of treating common musculoskeletal complaints that often affect pregnant women. The use of chiropractic includes (but may not be limited to): making the pregnant mom feel more comfortable during her pregnancy, helping to facilitate an uncomplicated labor and delivery process, and to help control low back, mid back, and/or neck pain during the nine-month process. They reported that 50% of all pregnant women experience back pain during their pregnancy and 50-75% experience back pain during labor. The study points out that only 21% of pregnant women with back pain consult their medical physician about it. More than seven out of ten expectant mothers in a study who sought chiropractic treatment for back pain benefited from care. There are also special techniques some chiropractors are certified in such as the “Webster Technique” in which pediatricians and midwives will frequently refer the pregnant mother to a certified DC to move the fetus from a breach position to a head down (proper) position.