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FootScope

A foot health message from
Proactive Podiatry

Pregnancy and foot pain



Do your feet feel like they might explode at any second? The weight gain experienced during pregnancy places a huge amount of unexpected pressure on your feet (and indeed on all of your joints!). Your entire centre of gravity shifts as your belly grows larger and it's common for pregnant women to suffer from foot pain, swelling, leg cramps and varicose veins. All of these symptoms can be relieved through proper care for your feet.

With extra weight and force placed on your feet, one of the main problems during pregnancy is flat feet. Increased pressure causes your arches to collapse and your feet to roll inwards. This can be incredibly painful as other parts of your feet and legs — your tendons, ligaments and muscles — are all working harder to keep you stable.

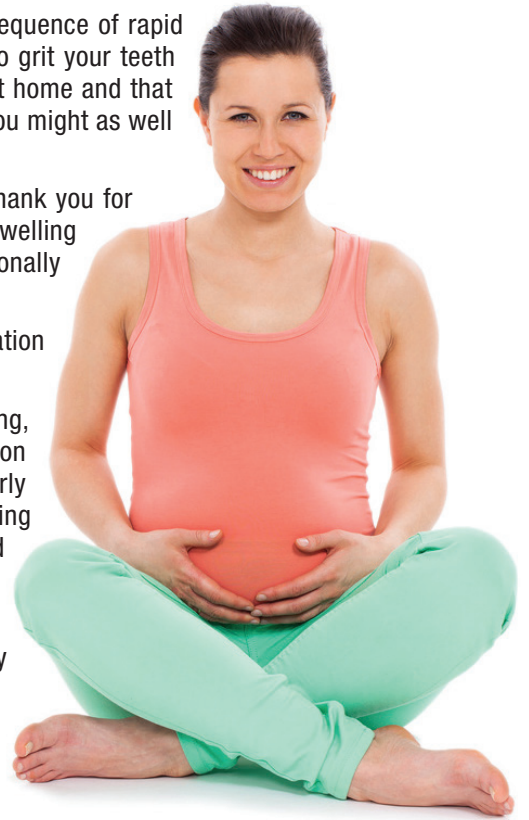
Another major pain point during pregnancy is swelling. As your uterus grows to accommodate your growing baby, the flow of blood and fluids to your extremities can become cut off. You don't have more fluid in your body than usual, it's just that more of it tends to get trapped around your feet and legs. This can lead to painful swelling. As long as the swelling is the same in both feet, this is completely normal. If you have very sudden swelling, or swelling that is noticeably different between your feet or appears in your hands or face make sure you contact a doctor immediately.

Before your feet actually explode, there are treatments available to relieve foot pain. Comfortable footwear is key to giving your feet the support they need, so ditch the heels, sandals and flip flops and invest in some shoes that properly support you. Orthotics can also be a real help for flattened feet, and the support will be noticed gratefully by the ligaments, tendons and muscles working overtime to support you and your growing tummy!

Ten tips to prevent foot pain during pregnancy

Pain in your feet during pregnancy may be both common and an inevitable consequence of rapid weight gain (mostly the weight of the baby!), but that doesn't mean you have to grit your teeth and endure it. We've compiled a list of ten tips that are easy for you to follow at home and that will make you more comfortable during your pregnancy. Nine months is a long time, you might as well be as comfy as possible!

- 1** Wear comfortable, supportive shoes with a bit of shock absorption, your feet will thank you for them as they won't have to work so hard to keep you stable. You may find that with swelling you will need a shoe size bigger than what you are used to. Get your feet professionally measured and avoid wearing shoes that are too tight.
- 2** Wear socks without elastic in them and try to avoid anything that will restrict circulation to your feet and you'll feel far more comfortable for it.
- 3** Take in regular exercise to keep the blood circulating around your body. Walking, swimming and yoga are good options as they are low impact and will be easy on your feet while giving you the workout your body needs. Swimming is particularly recommended because the force of the water on your body actually helps to bring swelling down. If you are sitting for long periods of time (e.g. at work) be sure to stand up and have a walk around throughout the day.
- 4** Stretch! If you notice cramps in your feet or calves stand up and have a good stretch to relieve the pain. Remember that your muscles and ligaments are working really hard, so show them some TLC by stretching just as you would after exercising.
- 5** Elevate your feet as much as possible to minimise swelling. Keep a footrest or a box under your desk at work so you can keep your feet up at the office.
- 6** Avoid crossing your legs as that will restrict blood flow and increase swelling.
- 7** Drink plenty of water. Drinking more water won't make you retain more water; it actually does the opposite, so keep the fluids up.
- 8** Eat healthy! Make sure you're eating loads of healthy foods and a well balanced diet. Lay off the salt as it will cause you to retain more water.
- 9** Sleep on your left side. Sleeping on the left opens up your blood vessels and will encourage more fluid to flow upwards from your feet.
- 10** Ingrown toenails can be a risk resulting from tight shoes that push the skin around nails cut too short. Keep your nails healthy and check them regularly for signs of injury.



Are your toenails growing like crazy too?

The heady combination of hormones, pre-natal vitamins and increased blood flow make your nails grow a lot faster than usual. This is also what makes your hair so nice and shiny but can be more problematic for your feet — especially once it gets difficult to bend down and sort them out!

As well as growing at superhuman speeds, you may notice that your nails are more brittle or delicate and possibly discoloured and loose. These changes are caused by the nutrients that usually go to your nails being redirected to your baby. If you've noticed changes in your nails, don't worry, they

usually go back to normal after pregnancy and there are a few things you can do to look after them in the meantime.

Avoid shoes and socks that are too tight as these will place unwanted pressure on your nails. Keep your nails trimmed, but not too short (you don't want to create ingrown toenails).

If you can't reach your toes yourself ask someone else to cut your nails for you. Eat lots of fruit and veg to be sure you're getting loads of nutrients to be shared between you and baby.

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