



Family Physical Therapy Services, Inc.

“Our Family Cares”

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Apr/May 2015 Newsletter

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A New Chapter

by Effie Koustas, MPT

Pregnancy is such a happy time in a woman’s life--a time when a new chapter is beginning! Whether it’s your first or third pregnancy, every pregnancy is different but what happens when pain interferes? With your first you only have to take care of yourself and can limit activities if you need to. From the second one on, however, you have to continue to care for your other child/children. In this issue, learn how we can help you-- what are other pregnant patients saying about the benefits of Physical Therapy, what exercises are safe to perform, and what day-to-day activities can be affected by pregnancy and how to best modify them.



In the news at FPTs

The entire FPTs family is proud to announce the arrival of Steve and Laurie’s beautiful baby boy. Lincoln Michael Lisowe was born on Friday March 20th at 2:53 pm,



weighing 10 pounds and measuring 21.75 inches long. His big sister Lilyann is happy to report that her little brother, mom and dad are all doing well and Daddy Steve couldn’t be happier!

Congratulations to the Lisowe family. Wishing you a lifetime of peace, health, happiness and cherished memories!

Success Story of the Month

by Alex Eugley



“I started having low back pain at the beginning of my second pregnancy. At first I hoped it would go away and that it was just a symptom during my first trimester. However, as my pregnancy progressed, it became more difficult to do everyday tasks as a stay-at-home mom chasing a toddler around. It was painful to pick up my son, carry laundry baskets, stand at the sink to do dishes, and even lying in bed was something I didn’t look forward to. I always felt so bad that I couldn’t pick up my son or couldn’t sit with him on the floor because of my pain. After a few weeks of Physical Therapy, I started to notice a difference in my pain level every day.

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Using proper body mechanics and the stretches to help with my specific issue, I was able to go to bed without feeling my low back pain. I also learned how to modify my daily activities to prevent the pain from getting worse. By the end of my pregnancy I had very little pain and was able to focus on the upcoming labor and the delivery of our new baby boy. I'm so thankful for the help I received from Effie and the rest of the staff at Family Physical Therapy Services. I'm now able to perform everyday tasks without any pain and am able to snuggle both of my boys without any issues."



If any of this sounds familiar to you, call FPTS NOW and ask to see Effie. She's our expert and has the ability to help you get back to living too. After all... **LIFE IS WAITING!**

Notes from our extended "family":

"I was referred to Effie from a friend who went to Northeastern University with her for Physical Therapy school. Effie helped empower me to learn exercises to relieve the serious pain I had in my sacroiliac joint and piriformis muscle so I could better enjoy my pregnancy. Effie's delicate approach, professionalism, and wonderful attitude brought me so much relief and comfort. They were the only medical appointments I actually looked forward to." – Tara

"Effie and everybody at Family Physical Therapy really helped get me through the end of my pregnancy. My job requires me to be on my feet in a fast paced environment all day, every day. In the 2nd half of my pregnancy I had issues with my sciatic nerve among several other pains that made being effective at my job nearly impossible. Effie worked with me, my schedule and my body on a regular basis to get me through this hard time. She really understood me and my needs as a patient and treated me like family. I could not have gotten through without her expertise, help and guidance." – Ashley

"Your newsletter is very informative. Well done. Thank you for including me on your mailing list. I especially enjoyed Dan Baram's article about not overdoing fitness. Although I have a reputation for pushing the limits and I don't always heed the warnings, it's always good to be reminded! During the winter I was able to snowshoe again for the first time in five years; kickboxing and gym on Friday; hopefully paddle boarding in the summer. Life is good when I can move!" – Dawn

Helping Hands Honoree

CONGRATULATIONS GO OUT TO Carol Stanium as this month's **Triple H** winner! This is what she has to say: "*Family Physical Therapy is #1 in my book! Professionalism from the front office to the back. I am so pleased with my treatment and want to share the good word with everyone I know. I feel well cared for in your hands.*" ~ Thank you. Carol Stanium

This month we also want to extend a thank you to our friends at **Nini Bambini**. Located in Bedford, they provide "a nurturing resource that engages women, families and children from pregnancy to preschool".

Visit their website at: www.ninibambini.com

Helping hands program

Hey everyone! We've been getting wonderful 5 star reviews lately. You all must be pleased with your results and how wonderful you feel! Did you know that the greatest compliment that we can receive from you is a referral to one of your friends, family or colleagues that are struggling with injury or pain? Wouldn't you feel terrible if you didn't give them an opportunity to feel as good as you do?

Don't wait a minute longer. Give them a "Helping Hand" and tell them about our **free screenings**. When you do, your loved ones benefit from free professional guidance and advice from our staff of experts, and you get the satisfaction and joy of knowing that you helped them out. A WIN-WIN wouldn't you say? Not only that, you will be entered into our monthly drawing for a \$25 gift certificate to a local restaurant as a token of our appreciation. Just let us know who you are sending over and we will do the rest!

Benefits of Physical Therapy during Pregnancy

By Effie Koustas, MPT

During pregnancy, our bodies go through many changes, especially physical. It is a time when our posture will change, healthy weight gain should occur, and our endurance may decrease. Other changes may occur--low back pain and sciatica, neck/upper back pain, sacroiliac joint problems, hip pain, muscle spasms, and piriformis syndrome are common complaints from pregnant women. All of them can benefit from Physical Therapy intervention through the use of safe and effective techniques.

We use gentle hands-on techniques such as massage for sore muscles; joint mobilization and muscle energy techniques to relieve alignment-related problems; provide education (including handouts) on proper body mechanics, improved postural awareness/posture, and body positioning for sleeping; instruct you on how to perform self trigger point release; prescribe a home program of stretches and exercises (including pelvic floor/transverse abdominal muscle re-education); and educate you on safe exercise guidelines.

Though the demands on our body will increase, exercise can be a way to alleviate many of the discomforts we may experience. Research has shown that prenatal exercise is beneficial to both the mom and fetus.

Some of the benefits include:

- Reduced weight gain
- Improved muscle tone
- Improved self esteem
- Decreased incidence of varicosities
- Decreased incidence of low back pain
- Improved sleep

In addition to the above, exercise can help to possibly ease labor with fewer complications of delivery and faster postpartum recovery. There is also a decreased need for induction, operative and Cesarean deliveries, episiotomy, and anesthesia. Lastly, exercise can shorten hospital stays.

Is Your Phone Harming Your Spine

By Steve Lisowe, MSPT

The average American spends a whopping 162 minutes per day on their mobile device. 32% of that time is spent doing gaming and 17% is spent surfing Facebook. The average adolescent spends up to 7.5 hours per day using entertainment media of which smart phones are included. The problem with mobile device use, however, is that it is very difficult to use them for such a long period of time in an ergonomic manner. (Source: <http://www.geekwire.com/2014/flurry-report-mobile-phones-162-minutes/>)

The amount of pressure on the spine doubles for every inch the neck is more forward of the center of gravity. Hold your head upright in a neutral position (figure 1) and your spine experiences a normal 10-12 pounds of force, or about the weight of the head. Hold the head forward 60 degrees from upright, as happens when looking at a phone resting close to the body in your lap (figure 2), and the pressure on the spine goes up to 60 pounds. (Source: <http://www.cnn.com/2012/09/20/health/mobile-society-neck-pain/>)



Figure 1



Figure 2

The keys to solving this problem are reducing the angle of neck bend, decreasing the amount of time held between rest breaks, and decreasing the overall time in a forward bent posture over the course of the day. Here are some ideas:

- Learn to use text shortcuts to decrease time on the phone
- Use voice activated texting (keeps the phone up in front of you rather than down by your lap)
- Take 2 minute breaks every 15-20 minutes
- Use a lumbar roll or towel roll behind your low back to help maintain your posture
- Elevate your arms on a couple of pillows to avoid looking down so far
- Select a few tasks that would be better suited to handle on your desktop computer (which is properly setup ofcourse)
- Use speaker phone and actually call someone instead of texting them

If you are unsuccessful at reducing the strain on your neck, you'll need to learn how to strengthen your neck and upper back and shoulder blades to better support the load. Physical therapists at FPTS can design such a program to your needs.

What is Diastasis Rectus Abdominus and What Can You Do about It?

There are so many things to think about when you are pregnant. Am I eating healthy? Did I take my prenatal vitamins? Is it safe to continue cardiovascular exercise? One area that often gets overlooked is the abdominal muscles. Specifically, what happens to the rectus abdominis muscle, or the "six-pack muscle," during pregnancy and into postpartum. The rectus abdominis has ligamentous tissue called the linea alba that divides it into that six-pack configuration. As pregnancy progresses and ligamentous laxity increases, the linea alba can separate vertically near the belly button or anywhere along the abdomen. This separation is called Diastasis Rectus Abdominis (DRA) and not only occurs to 66% of women in their third trimester, but is also seen 8 weeks after delivery in 30%. Although this separation can close on its own during the first year postpartum, for many women it does not. As a result, each subsequent pregnancy can cause the DRA to increase, leading to pain from decreased low back and sacroiliac joint stability.

Looking for DRA isn't a routine check during your prenatal or postpartum doctor appointments, but it is an area that a Physical Therapist assesses. If DRA is present, it will be measured and you will be taught how to self-check the separation to monitor your progress at home. In order to reduce the separation, you will need to isolate the transverse abdominal muscle (the horizontal muscle that lies under the rectus abdominis). You will be taught how to isolate and contract the transverse abdominal muscle, as well as how to perform Kegel exercises, which strengthen the pelvic floor muscles. Together, these are the most important muscles for sacroiliac joint stability and improving their performance is the basic objective when initiating a core stabilization program. Without this ability, core stabilization isn't effective. Contrary to popular belief, doing sit ups (which works the rectus abdominis) to strengthen your core will actually worsen your DRA and should be avoided.

Whether you have just had your first baby, or your youngest is 20-years old, you may have DRA that has never been identified. That separation can be a cosmetic issue for you, but from an orthopedic standpoint, it is a main contributor to your unexplained back pain, that becomes chronic. If you do have back pain and/or want to strengthen your abdominals to stabilize your core, then you are an appropriate candidate for a Physical Therapy evaluation. Schedule your appointment today to learn self-management techniques as well as hands-on treatment as needed.

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The Personal and Professional Experience to Relieve Pregnancy-Related Aches & Pains

Effie Koustas, MPT, has **advanced Physical Therapy training** in pregnancy and postpartum fundamentals, Australian Physiotherapy & Pilates Institute (APPI) methods, and advanced exercise prescription for a healthy pregnancy. She is also a **wife and working mother of two** beautiful children. She knows first-hand what some of the most common challenges are facing mothers and mothers-to-be. She knows what it is like to **struggle and have pain getting a baby out of his/her crib**. Or the fear that your legs won't support you, and about the **pain and difficulty of rolling over in bed** or getting off the floor; not to mention how the simple joy of pushing a baby carriage, playing in the park, or rocking your baby suddenly becomes your **most dreaded activity** because of the pain.

If these problems sound familiar, you are not alone. The good news is that with Effie's education, advanced training, and experience, she is an **EXPERT** in relieving pregnancy related aches and pains. **She'll restore the love and joy that pregnancy and motherhood should bring.**

Don't settle for pain or anything that takes that joy and excitement away. There are numerous ways that Pre & Postnatal services can help.

Services include:

- Joint & soft tissue mobilization
- Education on body mechanics & postural awareness
- Recommendations on activity level during and after pregnancy
- APPI Pilates Method for rehabilitation to maintain pelvic alignment
- Specific treatment for pre/postnatal pain affecting your body

What are you waiting for? Call 644-8334 today

LIFE IS WAITING!

Hip, Pelvic & Low Back Pain Tips During Pregnancy*



Avoid activities/positions that strain the joints of the pelvis and lower back: crossing legs, climbing stairs, standing with weight on one leg, cross-trainer machine, stair stepper or stair climber machines, bicycling, sitting in asymmetrical positions.

Use the best sleeping position: Lying on your left side with pillow support under head & neck, between knees and under belly. A long body pillow works well, as one end can go between your knees and the other end under the belly. You can also purchase long body pillows made specifically for pregnant women.



Use good lifting techniques: Don't bend forward through the waist to pick up anything, but rather squat down (even for a paperclip or pacifier!). Get the weight of the object close to your body before standing. Don't hold your breath when lifting items; exhale as you lift. Avoid twisting to reach for or pick up items from any height.

For standing activities, such as washing dishes, cooking, ironing, brushing teeth, changing diapers: Keep a small footstool near common work areas. **Keep one foot on the stool** while performing the activity; interchange with the other foot every 5-10 minutes. In the kitchen or bathroom, open a cabinet door and rest your foot on the cabinet shelf.



Getting in and out of the car: Place all items in the passenger or back seat BEFORE getting into the driver's seat. After opening the driver's side door, turn to face away from the seat. Sit down and scoot back into the seat (still facing sideways). Now bring one leg at a time into the car.

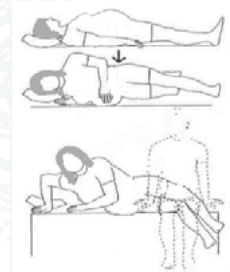


For getting out of the car: Bring one leg at a time out of the car. Turn your body to face toward the door. Scoot to the edge of the seat before standing. Retrieve items from the passenger seat or back seats AFTER getting out of the car.

Getting in and out of bed:

In: Sit on edge of bed and scoot back for thighs to be fully supported on bed. While lifting legs up onto bed, lower upper body weight onto elbow. Once lying on your side, you may further position yourself in sidelying or roll onto back.

Out: If lying on back, bend knees and roll onto side without twisting the spine. While lowering legs off edge of bed, push weight of trunk up with the help of your arms (elbow beneath and other hand in front). Once in a seated position, come to standing.



Avoid prolonged positions. If you sit all day at work, take brief standing or walking breaks every 15-30 minutes. If you stand all day or during cooking, etc., take a sitting break (preferably with feet propped up) every 15-30 minutes; pump your ankles during this break to improve blood flow and reduce swelling




You may want to **invest in a pregnancy support belt.** These can be found online or in maternity clothing stores or departments. Ask your therapist for recommendations




Use a cold or ice pack on "flared up" areas for 10 to 20 minutes

Three Gentle Stretches to Ease Pregnancy-Related Back Pain


Angry Cat Stretch – This variation of the pelvic tilt, done on all fours, strengthens the abdominal muscles and eases back pain during pregnancy and labor.

Starting position	Exercise
Get down on your hands and knees, arms shoulder-width apart and knees hip-width apart, keeping your arms straight but not locking the elbows.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As you breathe in, tighten your abdominal muscles and tuck your buttocks under and round your back. Relax your back into a neutral position as you breathe out. Repeat at your own pace, 10 times, inhaling in through your nose and out through your mouth. 

Child's Pose – This is a favorite yoga pose for stretching the back and hips.

Starting position	Exercise
Sit on the floor with your knees bent and your heels underneath your buttocks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stretch forward with your arms, shoulders and back. Your buttocks should stay on your heels or ankles, with your belly supported by your thighs. You can open your thighs wide to allow room for your beautiful baby bump. Hold for 30 seconds while relaxing into the stretch and taking deep breaths. 

Piriformis Stretch Sitting on a Chair

Starting position	Exercise
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sit upright in a chair with a small arch in your lower spine. Cross the left ankle over the right knee. Flex the left foot (push through the heel). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin to flex forward at the hips, keeping the natural arch in the back (focus on keeping your back straight and chest up). If the lower back begins to round backwards, or the head moves faster than the rest of the trunk, stop. You have gone too far. Go only to a point where you can keep the curve in the lower back and breathe here. Stretch should be felt in your low back/buttocks area. Hold for 30 seconds. Repeat 2-3 times.

If you are pregnant, do you have:

- Back pain when you sit or stand?
- Discomfort when you walk or exercise?
- A separation in your abdominals?

If you answered “YES” to any of these questions, then you may have a pre/postnatal related issue. Let Effie at FPTS determine if that’s the case and get you back on your feet and feeling better! After all...LIFE IS WAITING!

FREE Pregnancy Screen

This coupon may be given to friends and family

Family Physical Therapy Services
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Limited to first 20 callers
Offer expires 5/30/15

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