

# Is chiropractic a safe, non-invasive treatment for pregnancy discomforts?

by Dr. Cheryl L. Schmitt

As a chiropractor I see pregnant women for a variety of issues. Some come to me before getting pregnant if they are having troubles conceiving or just want to be in the best of health upon conception. Others come to me with specific issues. Some of the most common complaints pregnant women visit their chiropractor for are lower back pain, malposition of the baby (breech, posterior or transverse presentations), headaches, pregnancy induced hypertension and pubic bone pain.

A natural option for women with a malpositioned baby is the chiropractic adjustment called the Webster Technique. Developed by Dr. Larry Webster and formerly called the Webster Breech Turning Technique, this particular chiropractic adjustment was previously used during the seventh through ninth months of pregnancy. Also in the past, the Webster Technique primarily focused on women whose babies were presenting breech or transverse.

Since discovery of the Webster Technique, its protocol has been revised to include women of all stages of pregnancy. Doctors of chiropractic reported a greater than 82% success rate in the technique's ability to balance pelvic structures and remove constraint to the woman's uterus, thereby allowing the baby to turn into the vertex position. The Webster Technique has also been effective in diminishing pubic bone and lower back or sacroiliac pain as well as the incidence of c-sections. The Webster technique is therefore becoming an important part of prenatal care for all women looking to optimize their potential for more natural deliveries. (The Webster Technique: A Chiropractic Technique with Obstetric Implications. J Manipulative Physiol Ther. 2002 Jul-Aug; 25(6): E1-9)

Another substantial issue is lower back pain and pubic bone pain during pregnancy. In one study, 11 women meeting the criteria for sacroiliac joint dysfunction were treated with chiropractic treatment of the sacroiliac joints. After chiropractic therapy, 10 of the 11 women (91%) had relief of pain and no longer exhibited signs of sacroiliac joint dysfunction. ("Sacroiliac subluxation: a common, treatable cause of low-back pain in pregnancy". Daly JM, et al. Family Practice Research Journal, 1991: 11(2) 149-159.)

In another study, 84% of patients receiving chiropractic manipulation reported relief of back pain during pregnancy. There was significantly less likelihood of back labor when spinal manipulative therapy was administered during pregnancy. ("Back pain during pregnancy and labor". Diakow PR, et al. Journal of Manipulative and Physiologic Therapeutics, 1991: 14(2): 116-118.)

Chiropractic care is recommended for all pregnant women for the "common" ailments such as back or pubic bone pain, but also to optimize the birth experience. If the pelvic joints and nervous system are working at their optimal level during childbirth not only will you have less pain but studies show that labor will likely be shorter! The thing to remember is that chiropractic care removes any interference in the mind/body connection of the mom and helps her nervous system to run optimally. So I ask you this, would you rather be pregnant and labor with your nervous system working at 100% or not? If you believe your mind/body connection and nervous system function is important at this time in your life you should consult a chiropractor, whether you are having physical symptoms or not.