

Published in BeautyNewsNYC

Prenatal Physical Therapy- Owww to Ahhh!!!!

By Catherine Wayland

Hello Mamas. How are you? Surviving? Not too much longer sweet mamas, let's lean on each other here. This is when I do a lot of stopping other pregnant women in malls, grocery stores, bathrooms, who cares where and I engage, invigorate and throttle empathy from them. I have 59 days to countdown and blastoff – yeah!!!! So here we turn around the most difficult bend in the road. Gravity starts to pull at your groin, helping Mother Nature with her task. Meanwhile, you feel like your doing everything you can to keep the baby from dropping out. This can wreak havoc on your sense of equilibrium, both mentally and physically. That's why we are going to talk about the most important topic in my prenatal series – physical therapy.

Get An Early Start

Here I should apologize. This subject should have been discussed in the first trimester. The sooner the better, and before the larger increase of weight gain is the ideal here. But anytime is still a good time. Ok, now to it. Many of us get some aches and pains during the 9 months of pregnancy. It's natural that 25-65 (mas o menos) pounds of extra weight is going to shift things around a bit and cause some discomfort. But some of us unlucky ones find ourselves truly, physically challenged. Common limitations come in the form of Sciatica, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, and Lumbo-Pelvic Instability problems. I won the good odds bet with 2 out of 3. But if I have said anything at all of value in these months of prenatal chit chat, my enthusiasm and belief in physical therapy, has me rolling on the ground and jumping up with ease and agility singing "Amen sister, Amen." I'm not kidding. Listen up.

To help me write this article, I have used my own mystical healer, prophetic savior, Paul Ullucci of Ullucci Sports Medicine (www.risportsmedicine.com) in East Providence, RI (remember ladies, I am at my summer house). So any Manhattan ladies, summering in Rhode Island within the areas of Newport, East Bay, Little Compton, get yourself to the "Master" at 1235 Wampanoag Trail, East Providence, RI, phone 401-433-1500. Not to worry, I will have a list of New York City savants below. But first, let's talk pain.....

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Cat: Ow ow ow double triple ow! This woke me up during my pregnancy with Jax 2 and 3 times in the middle of the night, the pain was so bad. It also made my fingers and hands go numb so that when I was breastfeeding Jax in the middle of the night, I was scared I would drop him, so I would prop him on a Boppy pillow as an added safety measure. Thank God, I got into therapy with you, the relief was instant.

Paul: Thanks Catherine. Actually, Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is caused by swelling in the hands, tightness in the joints, and looseness in the ligaments, which allows the wrist to collapse causing pressure. The goal here is to work the swelling out of the hands and reduce the pain. The treatment prescribed is ice, ultrasound, soft tissue massage and stretching exercises.

Sciatica

Cat: Paul, this one I don't have a personal experience with.

Paul: Well, the truth is, many pregnant women suffer from false sciatica caused by tightness and spasm in the piri formis. But that doesn't mean the pain is not excruciating. The treatment here is aggressive stretching of hamstrings, piri formis, gluts and lower back, **lots of massage and ice.**

Lumbo and Pelvic Instability

Cat: This for me has been really tough. Again, I don't know how I could have made it through without this therapy.

Paul: Well first of all, you had a complete LCAC (Complete Left Anterior Ligament Repair) surgery on your left knee within a year prior to your first pregnancy. Injuries and surgeries close to your pregnancy can be very relevant in how your body and posture will shift during a pregnancy. If you have had an injury or surgery, you should be proactive with your doctor and physical therapist before any trouble starts to occur. But once there is a sign of pain, the sooner you come in for therapy, the better the results. Once the weight gain increases and the hormone relaxant releases in the body, things get trickier to adjust and stabilize. In the case of your first pregnancy, I was able to get you adjusted, strong, and flexible in the first trimester. Your second pregnancy, you waited a little too long.

Cat: I know, I know. I'm bad, I'm bad, and now I have had to work twice as hard with twice the pain.

Paul: But you've worked hard and had pretty terrific results considering the time lapse. The treatment that I prescribed for you has been stretching of hamstring, hip flexor, gluts, piri formis, and back. If we catch it early on in the first and second trimester we can try to adjust the lumbar and pelvis for alignment. If too late in the pregnancy, your body will be too loose to do the adjustment and there is a danger of premature labor. So then, we will work more with core strengthening of the lumbar and lower extremities. We want to keep a balance between muscle strength, muscle flexibility, and alignment of lumbar, spine, and pelvis.

Cat: Thanks Paul, you're the "Master."

As promised, some Manhattan savants:

Body Tuning & Physical Therapy 881 Seventh Avenue Studio 862 Floor 8M NY 212-246-7308

Marianne Ryan and Associates (specializing in pre/post partum) 6 E 45 St Suite 1205 NY 212-661-2933

Hands On Physical Therapy (multiple locations in NYC) Manhattan West 57 221 West 57th St 12th Floor NY 212-399-3800

TLC Physical Therapy 84 Bowery St 5F NY 212-925-8183

Pain-Free Beauty

Now, let's talk beauty. Ladies, mamas, dear sisters. Pregnancy is a Mount Everest Climb. It can offer beautiful sights at the top, but it can almost kill some of us getting there. I for one, refuse to be defeated at the onslaught of higher weight gain and body temperatures, terrible swelling, avalanches of fatigue, and hideous physical pain. If you want to end up with a beautiful baby and a beautiful you, you need to face the challenge head on. Remember, ride this boat with the tide, not against it. The waves may be a murderous vertical drop. But don't give up. Sitting with physical pain during pregnancy can cause further weight gain, which can cause further pain. This will of course make the post-partum recovery of the body, frustrating at best. And very importantly, a body ravaged from physical pain can be stiff and terribly weak. It can disadvantage us during our marathon labors and deliveries. If we stretch and strengthen so that we are stronger and more flexible, we might enable an easier birth process. I believe strongly that with my wrist pain, numb hands, and awful pelvic pain, had I not done the therapy, instead of a half-hour of pushing and a porpoise baby birth, I might have had a troubled labor. I think beauty comes not just from makeup and clothing and great hairstyles, but peace from the big 3 – mentally, spiritually, and physically. Peace to you, and please, feel good, beautiful and strong.

Love, Mama