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**PRE NATAL PHYSICAL THERAPY:  
PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN A CURE**

*By, Nazneen Vasi, MSPT*

During the prenatal period, a woman undergoes various physiological and physical changes. Sometimes, these changes carry over to the postnatal period. Therefore, it is important for all pregnant women to understand and tend to their changing bodies pre-natally to optimize post-natal recovery.

Many countries around the world implement prenatal programs to minimize pregnancy complications through patient education. In the U.S.A, however, these issues are not usually addressed. We believe that health care practitioners can work together to decrease the discomforts commonly experienced with pregnancy.

From the time a woman is aware that she is pregnant, she should be advised to visit a physical therapist. The physical therapist will evaluate and educate her about prenatal musculoskeletal changes. Preventive physical therapy will include education regarding proper body mechanics and posture, breathing mechanics, stretching, strengthening, balance activities, and the use of splints or support belts.

We recommend one visit per trimester to educate the patient about her changing body, thereby minimizing the risks of muscle imbalances, nerve compression, and joint dysfunction.



The most common pregnancy related conditions are low back pain and sciatica. Other conditions seen during the prenatal period are shortness of breath, diastasis recti, leg cramps, carpal tunnel syndrome, sacro-iliac joint dysfunction, pubic symphysis pain and/or separation, thoracic pain, urinary incontinence, and constipation. All of these conditions can be addressed during a series of physical therapy sessions. Physical therapy treatments would include pain management strategies, soft tissue manipulation, exercises to improve physical functioning, and a home exercise program.

**POSTURAL CHANGES**

- COG moves upwards and forwards
- Base of support becomes wider
- Increased cervical lordosis
- Forward head posture
- Increased thoracic kyphosis
- Increased lumbar lordosis

**DIASTASIS RECTI**

- Separation of the rectus abdominis muscle (>3 finger widths)
- Caused by weak abdominals  
Results in low back instability and pain
- Treatment: strengthening of rectus and transverse abdominis with splints

**MUSCLES PRONE TO TIGHTNESS:**

LATISSIMUS DORSI  
DIAPHRAGM  
QUADRATUS LUMBORUM  
ERECTOR SPINAE  
ILIOPSOAS  
PIRIFORMIS  
OBTURATOR INTERNUS  
TFL  
HAMSTRINGS  
RECTUS FEMORIS  
ADDUCTOR

**MUSCLES PRONE TO WEAKNESS:**

ABDOMINALS  
GLUTEII  
LEVATOR ANI  
COCCYGEUS

# ACUPUNCTURE

**By, Paula Haberman, PT. L.Ac**

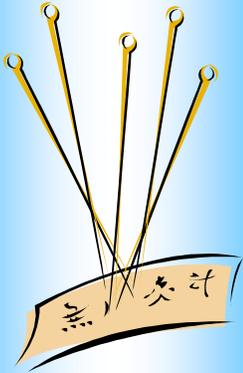
Beyond Basics is pleased to offer acupuncture services in our office. Research proves that acupuncture increases the body's natural production of hormones (including serotonin and endorphins) that help the body respond to stress and injury. Stimulation of acupuncture points transmit impulses to the hypothalamus-pituitary glands which in turn release neurotransmitters and endorphins – our body's natural pain killing mechanisms. Serotonin release affects human disposition, thus acupuncture's use for depressive states.

The side effects are few, and mostly positive. Acupuncture has been shown to stimulate the immune system by increasing T-cell count, help promote sleep, increase stamina and energy, decrease inflammation and relieve chronic musculoskeletal pain and tension. It has affects upon circulation, blood pressure, rhythm and stroke volume of the heart, secretion of gastric acid and production of red and white cells. It facilitates the release of long standing muscle shortening and trigger points and is calming to the nervous system.

Acupuncture is easily integrated into a multi-disciplinary team approach. It can help minimize the formation of post surgical scar tissue, promote faster recovery from pain and numbness, reduce the surface manifestations of pain in visceral problems, alleviate constipation that result from meds and generally promotes a sense of well-being and relaxation.

Acupuncture used in conjunction with physical therapy has been found to be an effective treatment combination for chronic pelvic pain for both men and women. It is also effective in diminishing the continual nociceptive input that leaves a pain sensory memory in the central nervous system – a major factor in chronic conditions.

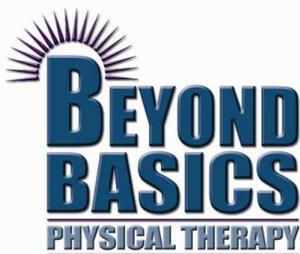
Paula Haberman, PT., L.Ac., is a board certified and New State licensed Physical Therapist and Acupuncturist specializing in sports and dance injuries, pain management, trigger point and myofascial release, postural re-alignment, G.I disorders and pelvic pain. She writes and teaches courses to both Physical Therapists and Acupuncturists and is an approved provider to grant Continuing Education credits by both the NCCAOM (National Certification Commission of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine) and the APTA (American Physical Therapy Association). Ms. Haberman's particular style of acupuncture incorporates her Physical Therapy skills and includes muscular rebalancing of the entire pelvic region. For more information please visit her website [www.acupuncture-et-al.com](http://www.acupuncture-et-al.com)



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**BBPT STAFF NEWS:**  
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