

# How to Raise Children Without Back Pain

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Raising children is hard work. It requires physical strength and endurance along with a big heart and kisses that can cure everything. Most postpartum moms have weakness in their abdominals, pelvic floor muscles and the back muscles. The upper back muscles must be strong enough to tolerate many hours of lifting and carrying. It is amazing how a 7 pound baby can require so much energy. The key is to get stronger before the baby gets bigger.

## Posture

Burning pain along the bra line often means you are slouching too much. Much of a mother's day is spent bent over in the slouched position. Proper posture and body mechanics are a must in decreasing or avoiding back pain.

- Stand tall as often as you can, for example while washing dishes, ironing, changing baby, waiting in line at the grocery store. If you can iron while standing straight your back will hurt less.
- When you must bend, do so at the hips, not the waist. Keep your back straight (stick your breasts out) and bend at the hips (sticking your buttocks out). It may feel funny at first but soon it will feel natural and normal. Sometimes people are self-conscious, no one will even notice you are bending differently.
- Sit up tall in the chair especially when feeding the baby. Whether you breastfeed or bottle-feed, proper upright sitting posture is essential. Place a pillow under the baby to bring him up to you. Also place a small towel roll at your lower back to help you sit tall. A firm chair will also support the spine better than the soft couch.

## Strengthening exercises

- Just standing and sitting tall can be an exercise for some.
- Squeeze the shoulder blades in back to strengthen the upper back muscles.
- Back up against the wall to remind yourself how it feels to stand tall. Then move away from the wall and keep that posture.
- Weights and bands can be used to strengthen the muscles in a variety of ways. Check with your physician, physical therapist, or local health club for ideas.
- Abdominal muscles require special attention [http://www.bethshelly.com/abdominal\\_exercises.html](http://www.bethshelly.com/abdominal_exercises.html) after pregnancy. Often women start with exercises that are too difficult. Learn more on my web site. Focus on quality and consider physical therapy if you are not getting the results you expect.
- The pelvic floor muscle is weakened and stretched during pregnancy and delivery. Even women with cesarean delivery need to recover pelvic floor strength for good pelvic health. Try these ideas to [strengthen the muscle](#) and contact your doctor for a referral to a specialized pelvic PT if you still have symptoms of leaking or pelvic pressure.

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All women should have a general exercise program especially after pregnancy. Motherhood takes up a lot of time and many find it difficult to get to the gym or do exercises. Simple stretches and strengthening exercises can be done anywhere. Take a few moments each day and stretch the arms up over head or squeeze the shoulder blades together in back. It may not seem like much but it can make the difference.

In some cases, back pain makes it necessary to work individually with a physician or physical therapist before generalized exercise can be tolerated. Speak up and ask for help if you have persistent pain.