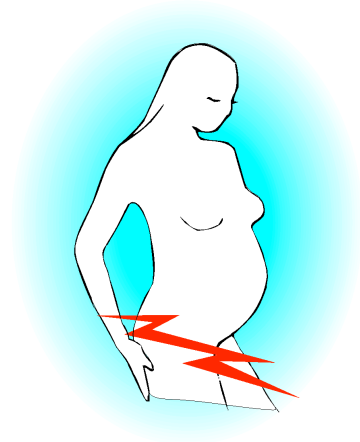


SPD/PGP – Tips for Managing



1. General
2. Housework
3. Managing Meals
4. Managing young babies or children
5. Travel and driving

- a. **General:** The following tips have been taken from women’s comments on the different things that help to relieve their SPD symptoms. Everyone is different – what works for one person is not necessarily good for another. It’s a matter of trial and error and finding out what works for you.
- Use a pillow or cushion between your knees when sleeping on your side, or a pillow under the back of your knees when lying on your back. Some women find a full ‘body pillow’ helpful.
 - Use a pillow under your tummy (in pregnancy) when sleeping
 - A firm, supportive bed is good for keeping your spine in alignment. However, many women with SPD find that this is made much more comfortable with a soft overlay on top e.g. an ‘egg-crate’ type foam mattress topper pad, or a ‘memory foam’ mattress
 - Some women find air mattresses much easier for turning over in bed.
 - Keep your legs close together and parallel when moving, turning over in bed, (rolling like a log). keep legs together getting in and out of cars etc. Take small steps when walking and try to avoid curbs, stairs and any uneven ground.
 - Satin sheets or nightwear may make it easier to turn over in bed
 - When standing, stand with weight evenly distributed through both legs
 - Move slowly and without sudden movements – taking extra care not to slip or trip up
 - Sit down to put on underwear, socks and pants
 - Avoid “straddle” movements and positions
 - Avoid heavy lifting, twisting movements and any other movements you know will hurt you e.g. vacuuming can often be a problem
 - Heat packs over the painful joint may reduce pain. Use these packs well wrapped in towels to avoid excessive heat on the skin. Wheat bags, heated in the microwave with a cup of water, will give off a ‘wet’ heat that can be particularly effective.
 - The use of pain medication is generally not advised during pregnancy. Consult your midwife or doctor for options. Alternatives can be used effectively - massage, hot packs and water, Homoeopathy, Acupuncture, Trigger Point Therapy, Pregnancy Pelvic bodywork, Shiatsu, Aromatherapy etc. Pain is nature’s warning and appropriate consultation with a therapist needs to be sought (these treatments are suitable at any time both during and after pregnancy). If physiotherapy is not helping try an osteopath experienced in SPD/PGP.
 - If you are taking any medications/supplements or undergoing any kind of therapy, it is a good idea to keep a diary of how you are feeling each day. This makes it easier to assess how a particular treatment is working for you.
 - Stretching the hamstrings can be helpful for sciatica. Use a stirrup (long piece of rope or a belt) around your foot to reduce the strain on your back. Stretch hamstrings gradually
 - Use some kind of pelvic support. Some women find that maternity belts work well, but if your pelvic bones are misaligned this can increase the pain. Supports with a little more ‘give’ e.g. an elasticised sacro-iliac support belt or similar may be helpful (see website links). Qualified therapists can assist with this (e.g. physios or orthotists). They will fit the belt and teach you how to manage this and do it correctly.
 - Back pain can be helped by gentle massage, pelvic rocks or resting backwards (carefully!) over a Swiss ball. Use a lumbar cushion as a support for your back when sitting.

- Swimming (not breaststroke) or walking in water can be helpful for some women. Others may find that the water's resistance puts too much stress on their joints. Some women find just floating in a pool very relaxing and therapeutic. Do what works for you.
- In severe cases, the use of a walking frame, crutches or a wheelchair may be recommended. Your doctor can provide you with an application for a disabled parking card if necessary.
- Take care when lifting. Always hold the object to be lifted close to your body, bend your knees and keep your back straight. Avoid all heavy lifting whenever possible.
- Rest can be extremely helpful. However, it is best to keep as active as possible within the limits of your pain. Sometimes, gentle walking can reduce pain, but always take care not to overdo it. Listen to your body
- Ask for help. Friends and family are often your best resources. (An information document from SPDZRG for family and friends should be available by mid 2006). Talk to your doctor or medical professional about the possibility of organising home help
- Place office chairs around the house for doing certain tasks e.g. chopping vegetables in the kitchen, ironing etc. Office chairs are ideal because their height can be adjusted to suit the work surface. The arms on directors type chairs can help you ease and lower yourself.
- Use a plastic garden chair in the shower if necessary. These are more stable than bathroom stools and often have open sides and vents to let the water run through.
- Some women find Lazy Boy or electrically operated armchairs very comfortable, for watching TV and sitting generally. If you are pregnant however, it is better to lie on your side. The posture of pregnant women is important. Movement and posture in pregnancy influence the baby's position for labour and birth. Use gravity to assist your baby into a good position for birth. The living room couch or arm chair are contributors to babies becoming Occipital Posterior (OP). The back of the baby's head and his back are heavier than his tummy and face. Whenever a pregnant woman rests with her back lower than her tummy, gravity pulls the baby's back towards the mother's back and can cause the back of the baby's head to press against the mother's lower spine and sacrum. Keep your tummy lower than your spine. Keep your knees lower than your hips. Standing and sitting evenly helps. Try these postures instead - sit backwards on a narrow kitchen or dining chair if you are able. Sit on a birth ball. Kneel over a bean bag. Use side lying.
- Re-think your method of contraception following the birth. The contraceptive pill or any hormonal contraception may worsen some women's symptoms due to the hormones involved. (Ref) Hormonal contraception should not be prescribed or used while breastfeeding. Alternatives to hormonal contraception are diaphragms and condoms, natural family planning and natural fertility management.
- Invest in a good pair of shoes that give good support, and no high heels!
- If anything you are doing hurts, don't do it! Try to avoid activities that cause pain – often difficult with a baby and/or young children. but don't feel bad about asking for help. You may be able to repay the people who help you when you feel better.
- Use a small backpack or similar, to carry things that you may need, around the house with you during the day.
- Stairs can often create difficulties. Some women find that going up them side-on, one step at a time is OK. Or, try going up stairs on all fours; or sitting down and pushing yourself up one step at a time; or use a hand rail if available and pull yourself up, putting most of your weight on the rail.
- When going for walks, or in any situation where you are unsure how far you will need to walk, take a mobile phone with you so that you can call for assistance if necessary.
- If sitting on hard surfaces is uncomfortable for you, a cushion in a soft material bag that you can take with you (to restaurants etc) is a good idea. Putting it in a bag makes it less obvious that you are carrying a cushion around!
- Try using a 'shooting stick' or a walking stick that folds out to a small seat if you are going to be somewhere that requires standing for long periods, or if you need to rest frequently when walking.
- Treat yourself to a facial, a manicure or pedicure or have your hair done (some hairdressers will even come to you). Looking good and being pampered can make you feel much better.
- Try to involve a bit of laughter in your day – a favourite comedy, a visit from a friend who makes you smile, finding joy in your children.

- Remember that many women recover from SPD within six months of giving birth.
- Shopping centres will often have mobility scooters available, free of charge. It can be difficult to admit that you may need to use these kinds of aids, but what's more important, pride or shopping? A little retail therapy can be very good for you.
- Try to keep in touch with family and friends as much as possible, even if only by telephone or email. It is easy to feel isolated and lonely, especially if you are house-bound. Discussion forums on the internet can be good for chatting with other women who have SPD. Knowing that you are not the only one who is experiencing this distressing condition can be very helpful.
- Becoming involved with the SPD Resource group (where established) is one way of connecting with other women who have gone through something similar.

2. Housework:

- Use a long-handled dustpan and brush for sweeping floors and even carpets. This avoids the bending and twisting movement involved in vacuuming.
- Use a mop or a broom with a shortened handle when cleaning the shower floor, if you find kneeling difficult. Take care when mopping floors not to use a twisting action.
- Sit on a low stool to clean toilets etc
- Use the lightest possible vacuum cleaner, or have it set on a light suction setting (this reduces the effort and twisting required to push it along). Carpet sweepers are much improved these days, and some are rechargeable, are light and easy to use, and can offer a good alternative to vacuuming.
- Use a trolley containing cleaning materials to push around various rooms with you as you go. Include glass cleaner, polish, dusters, cloths etc
- A pick-up stick (often used by people with arthritis) or a plastic garden rake can be very useful around the house, especially for all the little things left about by small children.
- Try not to worry if housework does not get done when you would like it to. Your health and your baby's welfare are more important.
- Consider using a nappy wash and delivery service if you are using cloth nappies.
- Apply for home help if necessary. Your doctor will be able to help you with this. Otherwise, accept any offers of help from family and friends.

3. Managing Meals:

Try to make meal preparation as easy as possible for yourself. Some women find the following tips helpful:

- Sit down to chop vegetables etc. if standing for long periods is difficult or painful.
- Make sure that the cooking equipment you use most frequently is easily accessible in the kitchen and does not involve a lot of walking to and fro. Ask for help to rearrange your kitchen if necessary.
- Simple, easy to cook meals are best. Try stir-fries or one-pot casseroles. Meals cooked in a slow cooker ensure that you are not too busy cooking at what can be the worst time of the day with young children.
- Occasionally make an extra amount of a meal that can be frozen then reheated on a day when you are not feeling up to cooking.
- If you have access to a computer, try shopping online. Many major supermarkets offer this service and the groceries can be delivered to your door. Unfortunately, this service is not currently available in some rural areas or does not include organic items (butter, cheese, milk, meat etc)
- If you have to visit the supermarket, get a friend (or supermarket employee) to push the trolley for you. Manoeuvring a heavy trolley can be a stress on your pelvic joints.
- Ask for help. Even small children can be given simple jobs like laying the table, drying dishes etc.

4. **Managing a baby and young children:**

- Use a bassinet on wheels for your baby to sleep in during the day. This enables you to move it around easily, to keep the baby where you can easily see and hear him/her, and avoids trips to and from the bedroom. In some cases it may be possible to fix wheels onto a bassinet if it does not already have them. Baby hammocks are available that can be hung in doorways or from a beam. These are available with stands to which wheels may be attached. Place the baby's bed along side your bed for ease of lifting the baby out at night. Many parents find the family beds works best for them and helps build an ample breastmilk supply.
- Make sure that you have a changing table at a good height in a convenient place in the house or use table tops that are at a convenient height.
- Use a baby bath or bowl on a table or a surface where it is easy for you to sit or stand and manage the baby. You will need help to fill, carry and empty the bath. If no help is available, small babies can be bathed in the laundry or bathroom sink. Make sure that hot water taps are turned off tightly. Convertible changing table/baby baths are now available. These use water hoses, drains or a drainage hose and can be set up so the water drains outside. Very small babies and toddlers can also bath with their father providing a nice bonding time.
- Keep supplies of nappies, wipes, bibs etc in various rooms that you are using during the day to avoid unnecessary walking.
- Set up a central spot for yourself during the day with everything that you are likely to need close to hand e.g. a glass of water, cordless phone, TV remote, tissues, books etc
- Young children who are walking confidently can be encouraged to climb into a high chair (supervised of course) by placing a stool or a smaller chair next to it. Remove the chair when not in use.
- Toddlers can also be encouraged to climb into their own car seats. This will avoid the awkward lifting and twisting involved.
- Make sure that your house is as toddler-proof as possible, so that you are not constantly having to check up on what your 2 year old is up to. Put safety gates at the bottom and the top of stairs and shut doors to keep your toddler/s in sight. Make sure that any poisonous substances (cleaning fluids, garden sprays, make-up, pills etc) are out of reach (and cannot be reached by a climbing child).
- If you have a garden or piece of land, it is a good idea to have contained, fenced off area for little children to play in where you don't need to be worried about them getting out onto the road (and then having to chase them).
- Discover creative ways of playing with your children while sitting down e.g. reading, drawing, jigsaw puzzles, videos, singing and cuddles.
- Rest when your baby or young children rest. Take the opportunity to lie down and get as comfortable as possible while you can.

5. **Travel:** In Cars as a Passenger:

- Buy or make cushions of various sizes (e.g. one to sit on, a smaller lumbar support behind your back) to support you in the most comfortable position.
- Recline your seat (if possible) if sitting for any length of time causes pain.
- Get out and have a stretch or a short walk, at least once every hour when travelling long distances

As a Driver:

- Use cushions to make yourself as comfortable as possible
- Automatic cars are much easier to drive than manual cars and cause less stress on the pelvic joints
- If you are very disabled, a disabled parking permit may be an option (see your doctor for an application form). These may also be downloaded from the CCS mobility website.
- Keep both legs together and swivel on the seat to get in and out of the car. Some women find that a plastic bag on the seat or a rotating disc makes this easier. Sit on the seat first, then move both legs in keeping your knees together.

Air travel:

Unfortunately, airlines can be particularly unhelpful at dealing with people with disabilities, especially if you do not look obviously disabled or elderly or if you are not in a wheelchair. Often, women make requests for special assistance before undertaking a flight only to find that their requests have either been ignored or not passed on. Hopefully this attitude will improve in time.

- Ask for an aisle seat at check-in so that getting in and out of your seat is easier. The window seat does have advantages that other passengers will knock your knees when moving out of their seats. You could also try asking for the first seat in a compartment which would allow you a little more leg room.
- Ask for wheelchair assistance at check-in if walking is painful for you or you need to stand in queues, and request assistance also at your destination. Make sure that a cabin attendant on your flight also knows if you need a wheelchair at your destination, as this message often does not get passed on.
- If you are fortunate enough to be able to afford a business class seat, this can be very helpful as it allows you more room and the ability to recline your seat to a significant degree.
- Get up and walk around a little at frequent intervals if it is a long flight. This is good advice for everyone as it helps to avoid the blood clotting risks of 'economy class syndrome'.
- If you are feeling fragile, it may be worth giving some explanation to those who are sitting alongside you about taking care when 'squeezing' past you so you are not inadvertently knocked.

Do you have any other tips for coping with SPD that work for you? Let us know!

Email SPD.info@ihug.co.nz or write to us at:

SPDNZRG, P.O. Box 508 Drury 2247

Compiled by the editorial team at SPDNZRG Revised 2008