



Clients' Self-Care Options

an online resource
created to accompany

Pre- and Perinatal Massage Therapy:

*A Comprehensive Guide to Prenatal, Labor
and Postpartum Practice*
(Third Edition)

Carole Osborne

Michele Kolakowski

David M Lobenstine

(Handspring Publishing Ltd. 2021)



this resource links to:

Chapter 4, page 107, 112, 119



Clients' Self-Care Options

Often clients' own self-care, lifestyle changes and activities can profoundly improve their prenatal comfort and enjoyment—and just as powerfully negatively impact their pregnancy experience too. Consider if any of the following suggestions seem relevant for your individual client's needs. Should you decide to offer any suggestions, be sure to encourage her to review the advisability of that action with her maternity care providers.

Stress, Difficulty Sleeping, and Anxiety

- Talk with partner, friends, family, clergy, or other trusted, supportive individuals.
- Secure the services of a mental health professional to help with unresolved trauma and serious emotional conflicts.
- Take daily walks and engage in regular, appropriate exercise and other pleasing activities.
- Increase sleep and take frequent rests and naps.
- Practice deep abdominal breathing and other relaxation activities.
- Insure excellent nutritional intake.
- Learn more about pregnancy, labor, and birth through reading, reliable websites and blogs and childbirth education classes.
- Meditate, pray, or engage in other activities that create connection with your spiritual realities.
- Schedule regular prenatal massage therapy for yourself and your partner.
- If you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, try taking a warm bath or shower before bed. Drink hot water with lemon or have some warm milk. Stay away from coffee and teas or sodas that have caffeine.

[learn more with us @
bodytherapyeducation.com](https://www.bodytherapyeducation.com)



For Leg and Foot Pain

- Exercise regularly and within your medical care providers' parameters.
- Rest with legs elevated three times daily (10-20 minutes).
- Sit rather than stand; lie (on side) rather than sit when possible.
- Avoid positions that create pooling of blood in the legs such as crossing the legs while seated and prolonged periods of immobility such as long car rides.
- Put on support hosiery before rising in the morning.
- Avoid tight clothing, especially those with elastic bands that dig into the upper thigh or ankles.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Check calcium, magnesium, zinc, and potassium intake.
- Stretch all leg and pelvic muscles daily, especially calf muscles, quadriceps, hamstrings, adductors, hip rotators and gluteals.
- Use heat or cold on painful sites.
- Schedule regular therapeutic massage.
- Use a maternity support belt for extended periods of standing or walking.
- To reduce or relieve cramps: perform ankle movements such as drawing letters with the toes; perform preventative stretching of the calves just prior to bed; avoid pointing the toes, especially during the night, by stretching into the heel rather than pointing the toes and by loosening the bedcovers over the feet.
- To reduce or relieve vulvar varicose veins: apply ice pack for 20 minutes while lying down

[learn more with us @
bodytherapyeducation.com](https://www.bodytherapyeducation.com)



For Back and Pelvic Pain

- Sit and stand erect, aligning neck, rib cage, spine, and pelvis (see Structural Balance Education).
- Sit with lumbar support.
- Exercise regularly and within your medical care providers' parameters
- Elevate one leg on footstool if standing or seated for extended times.
- Lift properly by using legs rather than bending over at waist.
- Enlist partner to press both knees toward hip joint when seated to decompress sacroiliac joints. Alternatively, traction femur from hip joint, or try resting supine with calf of painful side on a chair seat for five minutes.
- Sleep on a firm mattress. Sidelying is the most neutral sleeping position, especially if you use several pillows or a long “body pillow” to support the top leg so that it is level with the top hip. Remember to support your belly with a small pillow under it too.
- Avoid lying on your back on hard surfaces.
- Use pillow support under uterus in sidelying position.
- Wear flat shoes with good arch support and cushioned soles.
- Use a maternity girdle, support belt, or traditional fabric wraps under abdomen to reduce strain to uterine ligaments and lumbar structure.
- Perform regular, appropriate abdominal toning exercises.
- Strengthen the psoas muscle with numerous pelvic tilts. Also perform “angry cat” pelvic rocking.
- Avoid “jackknifing” from a supine position by rolling to side then pushing torso up with arms.
- Avoid double leg raises from supine position.
- Apply heat or cold to the painful area.
- Schedule regular therapeutic massage.

[learn more with us @
bodytherapyeducation.com](https://www.bodytherapyeducation.com)



- Ask for back rubs from your partner or family. Ask them to learn the lumbosacral decompression and the baby lift and do them for her daily (observe relevant precautions & contraindications).

For Ribcage, Shoulder, Arm, Head and Neck Pain

- Exercise regularly and within your medical care providers' parameters.
- Avoid migraine headache triggers such as eating chocolate, caffeine drinks, red wines, and meats, strong cheeses, and some preserved meats. Other triggers: glaring sunlight and insufficient sleep.
- Soothe headaches by resting in quiet, dark places, applying ice packs on the nape of the neck, and performing self -massage of the neck, temples, and jaws.
- Maintain comfortable, erect posture for all activities.
- Deal productively and completely with stressful situations and avoid them when possible.
- Enjoy daily relaxation and pleasurable activities.
- Apply cold or heat locally to tight, painful areas of the back and shoulders.
- Wear a well-fitting maternity bra.
- For carpal tunnel and thoracic outlet: Wear a wrist splint while sleeping to hold the wrist in slight flexion. Avoid sleeping on your arm. Sleep with the affected arm overhead and supported by pillows. Stretch your wrist and fingers gently and massage them daily.
- Stretch your chest and upper spine by clasping your hands behind your back while pulling them away from your buttocks. Hold for 30 seconds minimum.

[learn more with us @
bodytherapyeducation.com](https://www.bodytherapyeducation.com)



For Digestive and Urinary Discomforts

- Eat smaller, more frequent meals.
- Chew fully, and avoid gas forming, spicy, or greasy foods.
- Eat whole grains and raw fruits and vegetables that are high in fiber.
- Avoid eating just before going to bed.
- Eat dry carbohydrates immediately upon waking and when nauseated.
- Drink a glass of water before you get up and get out of bed slowly.
- Supplement your diet with 25mg of B6 each 8 hours.
- Have some yogurt, cottage cheese, or dry toast during the night.
- Eat high protein foods such as eggs, cheese, and nuts and foods high in folate such as beans, nuts, broccoli, or okra.
- Sip soda water, especially flat ginger ale, or drink raspberry or ginger tea.
- Increase fluids; drinking one glass of water after urinating is an effective rule of thumb.
- Smell or eat sliced lemon.
- Sit upright, avoid tight clothing, and sleep with head and upper torso elevated to reduce heartburn.
- Engage in daily walks, appropriate exercise, and other pleasant activities.
- Increase muscle tone and blood supply to pelvic floor with 100 Kegels daily.
- Relieve hemorrhoids with sitz baths, ointments, ice pack, and avoid straining for a bowel movement. Also put your feet up on a low stool when you sit on the toilet and avoid long periods of standing.

[learn more with us @
bodytherapyeducation.com](https://www.bodytherapyeducation.com)



- Cranberry, orange, lemon, or grapefruit juice may help with cystitis as well as ensuring complete voiding when urinating.

[learn more with us @
bodytherapyeducation.com](https://www.bodytherapyeducation.com)