

## **Patient Information:**

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# **Pelvic Girdle Syndrome**

Congratulations you have been diagnosed as having **Pelvic Girdle syndrome**. What is that you may ask? Well there are many types of low back problems and this is one. It presents with some common and predictable pain sites and problems.

The pelvis and the lumbar spine work together to allow movement and provide a framework for the body. The pelvis protects some important organs and provides a base from which the legs and the spine can work. Since it is the junction point between the legs and the spine, it can be strained if either of these two areas apply too much stress on the pelvis.

The pelvis moves when the legs and the lumbar spine move and it is this movement that sometimes causes problems. Lifting normally involves the legs, which provide some large muscle forces to do the lift; the pelvis carries the weight while the spine transfers the force to the object being lifted. If any of these components of the lift are weaker than what is required for the lift or the mechanics of the lift is not optimal, then injury and pain can arise. The worse way to lift, as far as the pelvis is concerned, is to twist while lifting and have the feet on different levels.

There are two types of problems that can arise; painful and non painful. The painful problems will be noticed when a particular movement or position is performed which stresses the injured joint sufficiently. Sometimes the injury results in the joint becoming stiff with no pain. This may remain undetected or at a later date some other mechanical stresses may aggravate it.

Some positions that are painful with these problems are, lying on your stomach, sitting up straight and standing. You may have to lie twisted at night, such as one leg bent up and the other out straight. Often when it is painful, you will find you can only sit on one side of your pelvis in a firm chair and it is better in a soft chair. Pain often comes on while standing and it is hard to stand on one foot to put on clothes, for example. You may be stiff after sitting in the car and have pain on climbing stairs.

The pain can be in a number of areas, from the center of the lower back to the sacro-iliac joint. If it is worse it can refer into the groin and front of the thigh, as well as the buttock and back of the leg.

You have sprained one or both of the joints that join the lumbar spine. The joints will either move too much or not enough and cause pain if stressed or stiffen up to make other areas compensate for the decreased movement.

The best analogy for this problem is that you have distorted a cardboard box so it is not perfectly square any more. This will make other areas compensate and affect normal movement.

Your goal is to keep the major muscles that pull on the pelvis flexible, so they add to the twisting of the pelvis and avoided lifting while twisting.

In general your pain will change depending on the stress you apply to the joints. It will be worse after performing torsion activity. You may be stiff in the morning when you get up and it may take a while to loosen up; walking around often helps. You may find it easier to put on one sock than the other.

When you do the exercises they should not increase your leg pain or go further out into the leg. If they do then you are either pushing the exercises too much or moving in the wrong direction. Check with your clinician.

Your clinician will show you ways to do things differently during the day to minimize the stress on the joints and show you ways in which you can move the pelvis into a better position. This will mean that the pain should decrease, but the first thing you will notice is improved range of movement.

To stop the causing stress, keep the muscle stretched and try to return the cardboard box back to the correct shape.

Treatment will vary depending on the pain level, stage, and severity your problem. Between you and the clinician you will be able to manage this type of back problem well.