

**THE PHYSICAL  
THERAPY INSTITUTE**<sup>SM</sup>  
ORTHOPEDICS AND SPORTS MEDICINE

# NEWSLETTER

[WWW.PHYSICALTHERAPYINSTITUTE.COM](http://WWW.PHYSICALTHERAPYINSTITUTE.COM)



## RELIEVE PREGNANCY-RELATED BACK PAIN WITH PHYSICAL THERAPY

Are you currently pregnant and experiencing back pain? Have you given birth recently but are still feeling persistent pain, even after your delivery? One thing is for sure, pregnancy takes a toll on your body. Fortunately, our physical therapists can help relieve your back pain, both during your pregnancy and after you have given birth.

Many women experience low back or pelvic-region pain when pregnant, and a large percentage of them still have pain a year or more after giving birth. Your pain may develop in your sacroiliac (SI) joint, low back, or middle back. It may start as just an annoying ache or stiffness but can worsen and begin to significantly impact your ability to perform your daily activities, including caring for your baby.



# WHAT CAUSES BACK PAIN DURING AND AFTER PREGNANCY?

Back pain is common during pregnancy, with many women reporting pain both before and after giving birth. Most expecting mothers say their back pain occurs where your pelvis meets your spine (i.e., SI joint), but pain can develop anywhere in the spine.

There are many reasons why you may experience prenatal or postpartum back pain, including:

**Increased weight.** Women typically gain 25-35 pounds during pregnancy. This puts extra stress on the spine, and the growing baby in your uterus also puts extra pressure on the nerves and blood vessels surrounding your back and pelvis.

**Separation of muscles.** As your stomach continues to expand throughout your pregnancy, extreme stress is put on your abdominal muscles. With continued expansion,

**You do not need a doctor's prescription to seek physical therapy in the state of Pennsylvania you have direct access to physical therapy.**



these muscles can separate along the center, in a condition known as “diastasis recti.” This may cause a muscle imbalance that places more stress on the spine , which may result in back pain.

**Changes in posture.** When you’re pregnant, your center of gravity changes. To compensate for this, most women will adjust their posture and how they move, sometimes without even realizing they are doing so.

**Changes in hormones.** During pregnancy, your body releases a hormone known as “relaxin.” This increases joint laxity (looseness) in the pelvic area. This is your body’s natural way of preparing for birth; however, this hormone causes ligaments in the spine to loosen, resulting in less stability and more risk for the pain to ensue.

Low back pain is a common prenatal and postnatal pregnancy concern, but the good news is that it is treatable with physical therapy!

**How physical therapy can help your pregnancy-related pain.** Our physical therapists offer both pre-and postnatal treatments for pregnancy-related pain relief. At your initial appointment, you will be greeted by one of our experienced and dedicated physical therapists. They will perform a physical evaluation to assess the nature of your symptoms. Your medical history and any health risks will also be discussed and considered before creating a treatment plan. After your evaluation, your physical



therapist will put together an individualized program for you aimed at providing relief for your back pain and allowing for a smooth pregnancy and/or recovery from childbirth.

Treatment plans typically involve gentle therapeutic exercises, stretches, and manual therapy. These are all done to relieve pain, strengthen your core muscles, and improve posture. Your physical therapist may also suggest additional methods, such as massage therapies, to provide other relief and optimum function as deemed necessary.

**How strengthening your core can relieve your back pain.** The core muscles comprise the lower back, hip, pelvis, pelvic floor, and even the diaphragm muscle. The muscles that make up your core are designed to help stabilize your body, support your posture, and allow you to move appropriately. When any of the muscles within that group become weak, it is difficult for your body to function correctly.

Core strength is essential for mothers to allow them to tolerate the demands of motherhood. For specific conditions, such as cases regarding diastasis recti, condition-specific treatments will be designed to correct the symptoms. Diastasis recti can interfere with strengthening the abdomen muscles, resulting in weak core muscles and increased back pain.

Significant weakness in the core will often lead to compensations and straining different body areas, most

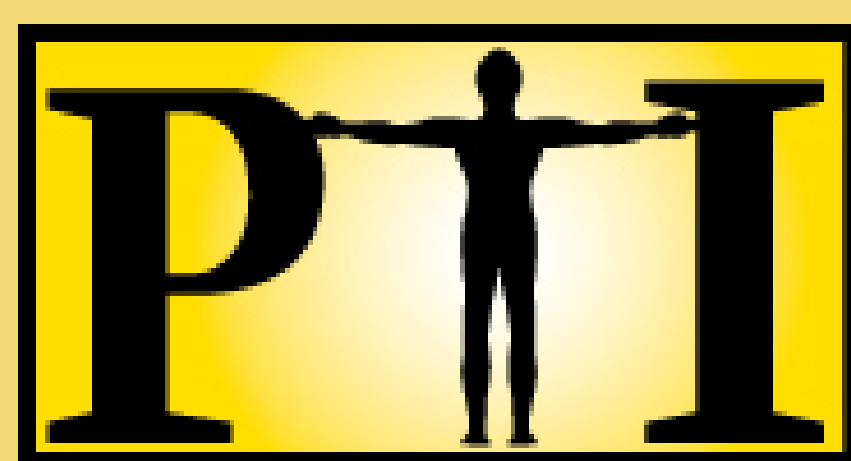
commonly the back and neck muscles. As a result, this leads to undesirable consequences, such as poor posture, fatigue, or pain. Fortunately, our highly-trained physical therapists use the latest evidence-based clinical knowledge in the field to identify and treat this condition based on its severity and the personal needs of the patient.

**Contact us today.** At The Physical Therapy Institute, we want to make sure you are as comfortable as possible as you welcome the new addition to your family! If you're experiencing back pain related to pregnancy, don't hesitate to reach out. Contact us today to schedule an appointment, so you can focus on what matters the most: taking care of your new little bundle of joy!

Sources: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32560862/>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7220333/>

# STAFF FEATURE



**KENDRA PILARSKI, PTA**  
**BURGETTSTOWN CLINIC MANAGER**

Kendra graduated from Allegheny College in 2014 with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. After working with children in the mental health field, Kendra decided to return to school at Butler County Community College to become a Physical Therapist Assistant. After graduating in 2018, she started working for the Physical Therapy Institute at numerous locations.

In 2021, she became our first PTA Clinic Manager of Burgettstown Physical Therapy. After playing basketball in college and suffering many injuries, she enjoys helping patients get back to their desired activities and hobbies.

In Kendra's spare time, she enjoys playing and watching sports and being with her friends and family.



# COGNITIVE BREATHING AND STRETCHING

Have you heard about how important it is to breathe correctly with stretching but aren't sure how? At The Physical Therapy Institute, our physical therapists will guide you through targeted stretches combined with cognitive breathing to ensure you get the benefits you are looking for!

Stretching is an effective way to restore and improve your joint mobility and muscle flexibility. When you combine cognitive breathing with stretching, you will reduce your stress levels, trigger a relaxation response and tolerate going deeper into your stretches to maximize your results.

Cognitive breathing means intentionally focusing on taking a deep breath to use the diaphragm muscle, resulting in a relaxation response. To gain the most from your stretching, take a deep breath through your nose and feel your diaphragm muscle help to fill your



lungs. Pause, and then allow the air to leave your lungs while simultaneously letting your body go deeper into the stretch you are performing.

Our physical therapists at The Physical Therapy Institute will guide you through targeted stretches to address your specific condition and use cognitive breathing techniques to maximize your results!

Call today to schedule an appointment with one of our specialists!



# FREE IN-PERSON WORKSHOPS

[www.physicaltherapyinstitute.com/workshops/](http://www.physicaltherapyinstitute.com/workshops/)

The Physical Therapy Institute hosts FREE workshops that focus on a specific type of pain or condition at select PTI locations. These hour-long workshops are hosted by the Physical Therapist at the clinic, and focus on getting you back to normal naturally, without the use of medications, injections or surgeries. To register for the workshops, follow the link above or click below! To learn more about the workshops, please call 724-503-6993 or email [jwatkins@pt-institute.com](mailto:jwatkins@pt-institute.com).

***SIGN UP TODAY FOR OUR  
FREE KNEE, LOW BACK, & SHOULDER  
PAIN WORKSHOPS***



***REGISTER TODAY***



## PATIENT SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT



### ***“Back to normal!”***

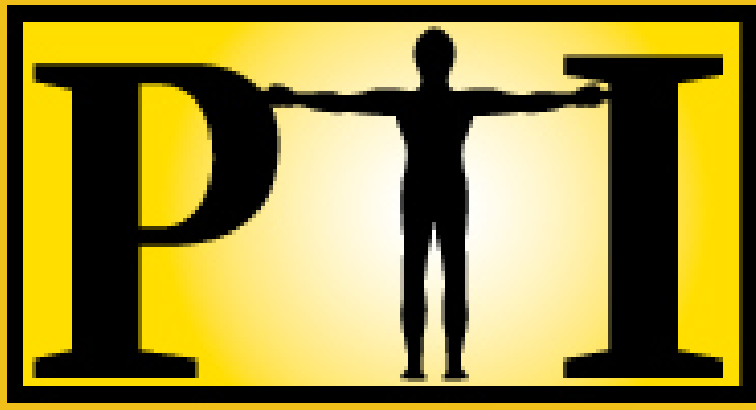
*“Everyone here at PTI is fantastic, professional, and friendly. Place is extremely well maintained and clean. I couldn’t do anything with my knee before therapy. Now...back to normal! Thank you PTI!”*

**– Christine B.**

TAKE YOUR HEALTH TO  
**THE NEXT LEVEL**

**COME BACK TO PT!**

Are you in pain? Have you sustained an injury?  
**Give us a call at a clinic nearest to you today to schedule an appointment!**



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**ORTHOPEDICS AND SPORTS MEDICINE**

**724-503-6993**

480 Johnson Road, Suite 303  
Washington, PA 15301

**VISIT A CLINIC NEAREST YOU!**

<b>Washington</b>	724.527.4264
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<b>Elizabethtown</b>	717.500.3411
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<b>Irwin</b>	724.395.7701
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<b>Monroeville</b>	412.693.6210
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<b>Mount Lebanon</b>	412.923.0923
<b>Murrysville</b>	724.948.1202
<b>Robinson Physical Therapy</b>	412.866.2764
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<b>Lower Burrell</b>	724.558.8013
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