

Round Ligament Pain during Pregnancy

Many women will experience a type of pain referred to as “round ligament pain” during their pregnancy. This is associated with abdominal pain or discomfort. Since any type of abdominal pain during pregnancy can be disconcerting, it is important to talk about round ligament pain to relieve any anxiety or fears you may have regarding the symptoms you are feeling. Round ligament pain is due to normal changes that take place in the body during pregnancy. It is caused by stretching of the round ligaments attached to the uterus. More commonly it occurs on the right side of the pelvis.

Round Ligament: An Overview

Typically in the non-pregnant state the uterus is about the size of an apple or pear. There are thick ligaments which hold the uterus in place in the abdomen, referred to as round ligaments.

During pregnancy, your uterus will expand in size and weight, and the ligaments supporting it will have to stretch, becoming longer and thinner. As these ligaments pull and tug they may irritate nearby nerve fibers, which causes pain. The severity of the pain in some cases can seem extreme.

Some common symptoms of round ligament pain include:

- Ligament spasms or contractions/cramps that trigger a sharp pain typically on the right side of the abdomen.
- Pain upon waking or suddenly rolling over in your sleep.
- Pain in the abdomen that is sharp brought on by exercise or other vigorous activity.

Similar Problems

Round ligament pain is often mistaken for other medical conditions because the symptoms are similar. Acute abdominal pain during pregnancy may also be a sign of other conditions including:

- **Abdominal cramps** - Some abdominal pain is simply caused by change in bowel habits associated with pregnancy. Gas is a common problem that can cause sharp, shooting pain.

You should always seek out medical care if your pain is accompanied by fever, chills, pain upon urination or if you have difficulty walking. Further exams and tests will be conducted to ensure that you do not have a more serious condition. It is not uncommon for women with lower abdominal pain to have a urinary tract infection, thus you may also be asked for a urine sample.

Treatment

If all other conditions are ruled out you can treat your round ligament pain relatively easily. You may be advised to take some acetaminophen (Tylenol) to reduce the severity of any persistent pain and asked to reduce your activity level. You can apply a heating pad to the area of pain or take a warm bath. Lying on the opposite side of the pain may help as well.

Most women will find relief from round ligament pain simply by altering their daily routines slightly. The good news is round ligament pain will disappear completely once you have given birth to your child!