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Obstet Gynecol. 1998 Feb;91(2):182-6.

## Follow-up of patients with low back pain during pregnancy.

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### Abstract

**OBJECTIVE:** To identify the long-term risk for low back pain among women with previous severe low back pain during pregnancy.

**METHODS:** In a previous prospective study, 79 pregnant women developed low back pain severe enough to require sick leave. Twelve years later a questionnaire was sent to 62 of these women and 84 controls who did not develop severe low back pain during pregnancy. The questionnaire asked about occupation, low back pain in general and during later pregnancies, and sick leave due to low back pain. There were also questions regarding use of oral contraceptives and its possible relation to low back pain.

**RESULTS:** The response rate was 84% in the back pain group and 80% among controls. The two groups were similar according to the percentage of women having had another pregnancy (33 of 52 [63%] versus 39 of 67 [58%]) but ten (19%) of the women with previous low back pain stated they had refrained from another pregnancy because of their fear of low back pain compared with only one control. Almost all women (31 of 33) with previous severe low back pain experienced the same symptoms in a subsequent pregnancy, compared with 17 of 39 (44%) controls. Even when they were not pregnant, women with previous low back pain suffered more often and used more sick leave due to low back pain (44 of 52 versus 43 of 67,  $\chi^2 = 5.68$ ,  $P < .05$ ). The location (**sacroiliac joint** or lumbar affection) of the previous low back pain did not affect the long-term prognosis. In a logistic regression model, previous low back pain during pregnancy was the only independent risk factor for low back pain during a subsequent pregnancy, whereas an occupation involving physical demand did not affect the results. However, together with previous low back pain during pregnancy, heavy occupation increased the risk for current nonpregnant low back pain.

**CONCLUSION:** Women with severe low back pain during pregnancy have an extremely high risk for experiencing a new episode of severe low back pain during another pregnancy and when not pregnant.

PMID: 9469272 [PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]

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