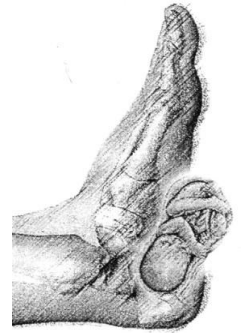


# Feetal knowledge



## The Impact of pregnancy on a woman's feet

### Why does pregnancy impact on a woman's feet?

The physical changes associated with pregnancy are many and varied. Of significance is the need for a woman's muscles and ligaments to stretch and relax to accommodate the weight and pressure of growing a baby. The endocrine system secretes the hormones- progesterone and relaxin- that facilitate this process of relaxation. As a result, many muscles and ligaments in the body are affected including the muscles of the feet and ankle.

Our feet play an important role, as the body's shock absorbers and in providing us with the ability to be upright and mobile. During a pregnancy, it is the feet that 'shoulder the burden' of carrying both the mother and baby through the 10 month gestation. In addition, it is the feet that continue to bear the weight of the woman post-birthing, who may get little rest as she cares and carries her newborn (and the other family members). From babyhood, infancy and early childhood, a woman will continue to carry her child for a considerable period in addition to all the accessories that accompany motherhood such as nappy bags, shopping bags, etc.

The muscles and ligaments that are responsible for the normal arch of the foot slacken during pregnancy causing flat feet. This can lead to a tendency to roll the foot inwards when walking (pronation). The foot also elongates making previously well fitting shoes too small! And remember a woman's feet may remain 1/2 size larger in the long term after the pregnancy!

Feet can become unbearably sore and pregnant woman's experience of fatigue is further compounded. Women may develop the typical pregnant 'waddle' as their body attempts to overcome the shift in their centre of gravity. They may also have a greater risk of ankle injury if they don't take the appropriate care during and after the pregnancy.

### What care a woman do to care for her feet whilst pregnant?

The answer lies principally in providing support to your feet by wearing supportive footwear. Flat shoes or slippers are the last thing a woman's feet needs as they don't provide support but exacerbates the flattening effect caused by the loss of tone.

General care considerations include:

- Elevating the feet as often as possible
- Walking, yoga or aqua-exercise are ideal forms of gentle therapeutic exercise which aids circulation and assists with muscle tone
- Wearing supportive stockings to also support the muscles/ligaments, to aid circulation and reduce swelling
- Seeking a podiatry review may be helpful
- **During the pregnancy, reflexology can provide deep relaxation, improve foot comfort and enhance a woman's pregnancy experience by reducing the 'minor' discomforts of pregnancy.**

