

Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica >

Volume 86, 2007 - [Issue 11](#)

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Original Article

Is operative delivery associated with postnatal back pain at eight weeks and eight months? A cohort study

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Pages 1322-1327 | Received 16 Mar 2007, Published online: 03 Aug 2009

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Abstract

Background. Back pain is very common during pregnancy and postnatally, and is a serious cause of morbidity. This research investigates the prevalence of antenatal back pain and the associations between mode of delivery and postnatal back pain at 8 weeks and 8 months. **Methods.** A prospective population-based cohort based in Avon, UK. Some 14,663 women were recruited antenatally, due between 1 April 1991 and 31 December 1992. Of these, 12,944 women with singleton, liveborn, term fetuses were included. Self-reported postal questionnaires were used to assess back pain antenatally and postnatally. The main outcome measures were postnatal back pain at 8 weeks and 8 months. **Results.** Back pain was very common with a prevalence of 80% at 32 weeks antenatally. Postnatally, back pain affected 68% of women at 8 weeks, and 60% at 8 months. Postnatal back pain was not associated with elective or emergency caesarean

section (e.g. adjusted 8 weeks OR: 1.23, 95% CI: 0.89, 1.70, and OR: 0.89, 95% CI: 0.65, 1.22, respectively) nor with assisted versus spontaneous vaginal delivery (OR: 0.99, 95% CI: 0.82, 1.20). Very similar patterns were observed at 8 months.

Conclusions. Antenatal and postnatal back pain are common. Elective caesarean section does not protect against postnatal back pain. Neither emergency caesarean section nor assisted vaginal delivery increases the risk of postnatal back pain compared with spontaneous delivery.

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