



Pregnancy is an exciting time of life, but because of the expected weight increase, it can also have a significant impact on the feet and legs. During pregnancy, the centre of gravity changes shifts forwards. This adds more stress on the knees and the feet as they help to maintain good balance and coordination.

Swelling (oedema) and **pronation** (feet rolling in at the ankle) are the two main challenges that women face during their pregnancy when it comes to the feet and legs, though they may also experience cramping, varicose veins and other symptoms.

- Regularly walking and stretching to promote healthy blood flow
- Ensure to drink plenty of water and reduce salt intake, which encourages fluid retention

Pronation

Pronation describes the position where the foot rolls in at the ankle, and is often referred to as having **flat feet**. While pronation doesn't create pain in itself, it is the effect that it can create on the surrounding muscles, tissues, ligaments, joints and bones that can cause feet to quickly become tired and ache.

It is the extra weight gained during pregnancy that usually causes pronation, as well as certain pregnancy hormones that result in greater ligament laxity. An example of commonly injured tissue due to pronation is the **plantar fascia** - a thick fibrous band that spans your arch from the heel to the toes. The extra weight and greater pronation excessively stretch the plantar fascia, resulting in microtears, pain and swelling.

This is where **orthotics** can offer great relief by reducing the degree of pronation and helping keep the foot and its structures supported and better aligned. It is important to treat any injuries or conditions that develop during pregnancy so they don't continue to worsen.

Disclaimer: This document is an informative guide only and is not a tool for diagnosis or a replacement for a consultation with a Podiatrist. If you are concerned with your feet or leg during pregnancy or develop any pains or problems, we recommend that you see your Podiatrist for an accurate diagnosis and an appropriate management plan. Referrals are not required to see a Podiatrist.

Oedema (Swelling)

Oedema describes the swelling that often occurs in the feet and legs. It is the increase in blood and fluid volume during pregnancy combined with the pressure from the growing fetus on the lower limbs that restricts the circulation and starts the swelling. Unfortunately, this also means the normal drainage of fluids away from the lower limbs is also affected, keeping them swollen.

Oedema can place great strain on various muscles, bones, joints, tissues and ligaments - and result in pain, discomfort, aches, and even damage to the body. Swelling can be reduced by:

- Regularly elevating the feet
- Avoiding standing for long periods of time
- Wearing good, supportive footwear that doesn't restrict blood flow or push on the feet
- Ensuring your socks aren't too tight