

SUPPORTED

"I had SPD in pregnancy. Can I have another baby?"

If you have had SPD it can seem that everyone has an opinion on whether or not you should have another baby. Parents, friends and even some medical professionals can assume that you wouldn't ("shouldn't?") even consider another pregnancy. Whilst this concern is often well meaning it is misplaced. Ultimately the decision to have another child is down to you and your partner only – nobody else counts.

The bad news is if you had SPD during one pregnancy, it is probable, although not inevitable, that it will recur in subsequent pregnancies. The physical symptoms can also be more pronounced, i.e. it can appear earlier and be more painful.

The good news is that second time round (and third and fourth etc.) you won't be taken by surprise. You will know what to expect and can seek the appropriate treatment and help quickly. If you actively treat your SPD with physiotherapy from the start you may find that your symptoms respond well and are less troublesome than before. You can proactively plan what assistance you are likely to need and arrange it in advance rather than reacting to emergencies. Many women we have spoken to say that, although they had SPD again they managed their symptoms better, coped well and enjoyed their pregnancies more because they were prepared.

When deciding whether or not to have another baby it can be helpful to imagine that you will have SPD again and consider the following questions:

- How would you feel if your SPD recurred?
- What treatment might you need? Are your midwife/doctor supportive? If not could you change them? Do you know where to go for physiotherapy? What occupational therapy equipment would you need to help you function normally? (e.g. monkey poles, perching stools, bath seats, raised toilet seats, grabbers etc.)
- Will you need help to care for your existing child/children? Who will provide this help? Can you afford additional childcare? Can you rely on family and friends? (remember that some family and friends may not be so supportive as first time)
- Will you be able continue to work? If not how would this affect the family finances? Would you be entitled to any benefits?
- How would you manage your home life? Would your partner be able to take over housework? Could you afford to pay someone to help? Could you do your shopping on the internet?

It can also be helpful to think about the long-term implications of having another child. Having a baby is not just about pregnancy, birth and the early years. Your baby will be with you for many years and will grow and develop into a child, teenager and adult. Most women with SPD regain their mobility and function eventually; the memory of the pain and problems subsides but the joy of the child remains.

The decision to have another baby is a personal one; what is right for one person will not be right for another. Over the last year we have spoken to many women with SPD, some have gone on to have very happy and successful pregnancies; others have categorically decided not to have any more children. Whatever you decide the Pelvic Partnership will support you in your decision.

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- Website: www.pelvicpartnership.org.uk
 - General enquiries: enquiries@pelvicpartnership.org.uk
 - Support for SPD: support@pelvicpartnership.org.uk
 - Membership: membership@pelvicpartnership.org.uk
 - Call The Pelvic Partnership on: 01235 820 921
 - If you are enquiring from Ireland: 028 4063 8116