

Concerns and Discomforts of Pregnancy

During pregnancy, you may have some concerns and discomforts as your body changes. Try these basic tips and talk to your doctor or nurse for more advice. Do not use any over the counter medicine or herbs without talking to your doctor first.

Nausea

Nausea or feeling sick to your stomach is often called morning sickness. It is common during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy.

- Try to eat crackers, dry toast or cereal before getting out of bed in the morning. These foods may help any time of the day you have nausea.
- Eat smaller meals more often instead of 3 large meals.
- Do not let your stomach get completely empty.
- Avoid lying down right after eating.
- Avoid high fat, fried, spicy or greasy foods.
- Avoid strong food smells.
- **Call your doctor** if you are not able to keep fluids down for over 24 hours, you have dark urine or you feel weak or dizzy.

Tired

Feeling tired is common.

- Exercise each day if allowed by your doctor to increase your energy.
- Rest often. Lie down on your left side for at least 1 hour during the day.

Trouble Sleeping

As you get bigger, it can be hard to get comfortable and sleep.

- Avoid drinks with caffeine.
- Do not eat right before bedtime.
- Try a warm bath or shower before bedtime.
- Practice relaxation exercises such as meditation, deep breathing and stretching.
- Lie on your left side with a pillow between your legs and under your abdomen.

Bleeding Gums

- Use a soft toothbrush and brush gently. Floss each day.

Nose Stuffiness and Nose Bleeds

- You may put saline drops or gel into your nose.
- To stop a nosebleed, sit up and apply firm pressure with your fingers to the side of the nose that is bleeding.

Breasts are tender or leak milk

- Wear a good bra that is not too tight such as a sports bra.
- It may help to wear a bra that has no underwires to bed at night.
- Wear nursing pads in your bra if your breasts leak milk.

Heartburn

Heartburn is a burning sensation in the stomach, throat or chest.

- Avoid caffeine, dairy, greasy, acidic or spicy foods.
- Eat smaller meals every 2-3 hours. Eat slowly.
- Do not lie down for 1 hour after eating.
- Do not wear tight-fitting clothes.
- Do not bend over at the waist. Bend at your knees.
- Do not exercise for at least 2 hours after eating.
- Sleep with your head up on an extra pillow.
- Do not smoke.

Swelling of Hands and Feet

- Avoid standing or sitting for long periods of time.
- Lie on your left side for 30-60 minutes, 3-4 times each day.
- Exercise if allowed by your doctor.
- Avoid foods high in salt.
- **Call your doctor** if you wake up in the morning a few days in a row with swelling.

Urinating Often

This is common.

- Do not limit liquid or water intake, but try to drink less before bedtime.

- Urinate often.
- Avoid liquids with caffeine.
- Do Kegel exercises to strengthen and control the muscles around the vagina.
 - To locate these muscles, stop and start your urine when you use the toilet.
 - Try to tighten the muscles a small amount at a time. Then release very slowly.
 - As you tighten the muscles, you should feel the area from your urethra, where urine leaves your body, lift slightly.
 - Practice these exercises while you sit, stand, walk, drive or watch television.
 - Do these exercises 10 times, 5 to 10 times a day.
- **Call your doctor** if you have burning or pain when urinating or have a fever.

Constipation or Diarrhea

- Drink 6 to 8 cups of liquids each day. Choose water, juices and milk.
- Eat high fiber foods such as raw fruits and vegetables, whole grains, high-fiber bran cereals and cooked dried beans.
- Exercise if allowed.
- Do not use laxatives, enemas or over the counter medicines unless your doctor says that it is okay.
- **Call your doctor** if your constipation does not get better in 2 days.

Hemorrhoids

- Keep your bowel movements regular and soft.
- Do not strain or push when having a bowel movement.
- Use cold compresses to relieve pain or swelling.
- **Call your doctor** if your pain increases or if you have bleeding.

Low Backache

- Rest often. Use a supportive mattress. Lie on your left side with pillows between the knees, behind the back and under the stomach.
- Stand up straight. Do not slump or slouch.
- Wear low heeled, good walking shoes.
- Do not stand in one place too long. Move around.

- Squat to pick up objects rather than bending at the waist. Do not bend over at the waist. Bend your knees.
- Exercise if allowed by your doctor.

Leg Cramps

Leg cramps are common in late pregnancy.

- Increase fluid, calcium and potassium intake in your diet. Eat foods such as milk, yogurt, bananas and orange juice.
- Rest often with your legs up during the day.
- Exercise if allowed by your doctor.
- During a leg cramp, straighten your leg and bend your foot toward the front of your leg.
- Wear low heeled, good walking shoes.
- **Call your doctor** if only one leg is hurting all the time, if there is a hot or reddened area on the leg, or if the leg hurts when you bend your foot toward the front of your leg.

Varicose Veins

Varicose veins are enlarged veins you may see on your legs.

- Avoid hose or girdles with elastic bands.
- Avoid standing or sitting for long periods of time.
- Take short rest breaks with your legs raised higher than your heart. Lie on your left side with a pillow between your legs and under your abdomen.
- Do not cross your legs or massage your legs or feet.

Vaginal Drainage

A change in vaginal drainage is normal.

- Bathe the outer vaginal area often. Use soap without perfume. Rinse well.
- Do not use tampons, vaginal sprays, douches, powders and colored or perfumed toilet paper.
- Wear cotton underwear. Avoid panty hose, girdles and tight pants.
- **Call your doctor** if the drainage has a bad odor, causes itching or there is blood.

Headaches

- Call your doctor or nurse for over the counter medicines that are safe to take. **Do not** take aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) or naprosyn (Aleve).
- **Call your doctor** if your headache does not go away, you have blurred vision or dizziness, or a lot of swelling in your hands or feet.

Cold, Flu or a Virus

- Call your doctor or nurse for over the counter medicines that are safe to take.
- Avoid being around people who are ill. Wash your hands often.
- **Call your doctor** if you have a fever, shortness of breath or are coughing up sputum.
- **Call you doctor** if you are exposed to someone who has the chicken pox or strep throat.

Abdominal Pain or Contractions

- You may feel some pain in the groin area as your uterus grows. This pain can get worse with sudden movements or prolonged walking.
- **Call your doctor right away** if you have severe pain.
- Braxton Hicks Contractions are mild contractions that are painless and irregular. These are common and do not need treatment.
- When you have a contraction, lie on your left side and rest. Place your hands on your abdomen and feel when the contraction begins and ends. Time how often the contractions are coming.
- **If you are less than 9 months pregnant** and are having contractions, drink 8-10 glasses of water in one hour. If you still have 4 or more contractions in one hour after drinking the water, call your doctor.
- **If you are in your ninth month of pregnancy**, call your doctor if your contractions are occurring more than 6 per hour, last longer than 15-30 seconds, become painful, or you have vaginal bleeding or leak fluid.
- Your doctor may tell you to call right away if you have any contractions.

Dizziness

- Lie on your left side.
- Change your position slowly.
- Get up slowly after you have been lying down.

- Eat regular meals.
- **Call your doctor** if it does not go away or happens often.

Sexual Relations

- It is common to have some changes in your sexual desire during pregnancy.
- Sexual intercourse is allowed during your pregnancy unless your doctor has told you otherwise.
- You may feel some cramping for a few minutes after sexual intercourse.

Changes in Mood or Thinking

- It is common to have mood swings from hormone changes in your body.
- You may notice that you are more forgetful. This is common. Make notes for yourself to help you remember important things.
- Tell your doctor if you have thoughts of harming yourself.

Food Cravings

You may have some unusual food cravings during pregnancy.

- Eat a variety of healthy foods at meals and for snacks.

Skin, Hair and Nails

- Your hair and nails may grow faster. If you plan to get your hair treated with chemicals, tell your hairdresser that you are pregnant.
- Common skin problems include changes in skin color, itchy skin, stretch marks and acne.
- **Call your doctor** if you have concerns.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.