

Comprehensive Care Center

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COMMON DISCOMFORTS OF PREGNANCY

Pregnancy brings about many changes in the body. These changes are mostly attributable to hormonal fluctuation and your changing anatomy. Below is a list of some common complaints that women experience in pregnancy, and some remedies to help cope with them. Don't hesitate to call us if you are unsure whether or not something is "normal".

Nausea:

Remember- nausea is not uncommon in pregnancy, but excessive vomiting is not normal! If you are unable to keep food and liquids down, you must tell the office right away. Sometimes frequent vomiting is caused by a different underlying problem. Regardless of the cause, adequate hydration and nutrition is very important for you and your growing baby. Here are some tips to help you combat nausea.

- Eat small, frequent meals instead of 2 or 3 large ones. Avoid leaving your stomach completely empty.
- Avoid spicy and fatty foods
- Keep some saltine crackers at your bedside and eat a few in the morning before you get out of bed.
- Consume high protein meals and snacks
- Keep a water bottle with you at all times and take frequent sips throughout the entire day. Avoid drinking large quantities at one time which could make nausea worse.
- Try ginger ale, ginger tea, or three 250mg ginger capsules during the day plus one at bedtime.
- Try vitamin B6 (pyridoxine) 25 mg every 6 to 8 hours. If this alone doesn't help, try adding doxylamine 12.5 mg to each dose of vitamin B6. These can be purchased over-the-counter at any pharmacy.
- If these things don't help, tell us! You may need a stronger medication and/or IV fluids to keep you hydrated.

Back Pain:

Back pain can be caused by a number of things, but is often exacerbated during pregnancy. As your baby grows, your body accommodates your new center of gravity by adjusting your posture. This makes your back muscles work harder than they did before. Hormonal changes also cause your ligaments to become more relaxed, which can also lead to back pain. Try some of these remedies if you are experiencing back pain:

- Heating pads and ice packs in combination with massage can help soothe sore muscles

- Tylenol can be taken as directed for pain relief
- Exercises to strengthen your back muscles and promote better posture can help alleviate the problem. We may recommend a Physical Therapist who specializes in these exercises to help get you started.
- When lifting objects, squat down, bend your knees, keep your back straight, and push up with your legs. Avoid any heavy lifting.
- Avoid high heels- this changes your center of gravity even more.
- Sleep on your side with a pillow between your legs for support
- Use a small pillow behind your back for support when sitting for long periods of time.
- When standing for long periods of time, place one foot on a stool or box
- Prenatal massage can help alleviate sore muscles and sciatic nerve pain associated with pregnancy
- Tell us right away if you have back pain that gets worse and doesn't go away with Tylenol or positional changes- especially if this is coming and going at regular intervals. This could be a sign of labor.

Constipation:

Constipation can be blamed on a number of things in pregnancy including hormonal changes that affect the GI system and iron supplementation. Some important points to remember:

- Stay well hydrated!! Adequate hydration keeps stools soft and makes them easier to pass.
- Stay active! Your bowels respond to lack of activity by slowing down. The less you move, the less they move. Exercising regularly will help you move your bowels more regularly.
- Get plenty of fiber in your diet. Dietary sources of fiber include whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans and legumes.
- Try Metamucil as a fiber supplement if your dietary sources of fiber are lacking. If these things aren't sufficient, you can add a stool softener to your regimen like Colace. If this doesn't help, let us know.

Indigestion/heartburn:

Heartburn is common in pregnancy, but its symptoms can often be confused with other conditions. If you have persistent epigastric pain that does not go away, tell your doctor.:

- Eat small, frequent meals
- Avoid spicy and fatty foods
- Avoid laying down completely flat- keep the head of the bed elevated at least 30 degrees.
- Avoid eating late at night or right before bed.
- If non-medical therapies fail, you can try TUMS as directed. Stronger medications may be required if symptoms do not improve.

Swelling:

Swelling is not uncommon in pregnancy but may be a sign of a potentially serious problem such preeclampsia or a blood clot.

- Reducing salt intake, wearing knee-high or thigh-high compression stockings, and keeping the legs elevated when at rest are good ways to reduce swelling.
- Prenatal massage can help improve circulation and reduce swelling, especially from the lower legs where blood does not flow as easily back to the heart.
- It is very important to alert your doctor if:

- 1) The swelling does not go down despite these measures
- 2) The swelling is worse in one leg than the other
- 3) The swelling is accompanied by an area of pain and redness, particularly over the calf.
- 4) Generalized swelling increases suddenly and rapidly.