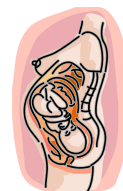


Easing the Discomforts of Pregnancy¹

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Symptoms of discomfort during pregnancy are normal and vary from woman to woman. These symptoms are mainly due to hormonal changes in a woman's body. Although there are specific recommendations for each discomfort, these are the most common recommendations to help you feel your best during pregnancy:



- Eat small, frequent meals
- Drink enough fluids
- Exercise
- Avoid spicy and fatty food
- Eat a high-fiber diet
- Get enough rest

"Morning sickness," or nausea and vomiting, during pregnancy, can indeed be worse for some women in the morning, but these symptoms can strike anytime throughout the day. To control morning sickness, the following tips may help:

- Eat six to eight small meals or snacks rather than three large meals a day
- Eat a cracker or dry cereal before you get out of bed in the morning
- Eat easy to digest food such as cereal, rice, applesauce, and gelatin
- Avoid strong odors
- Do not lie down right after eating

Although intensity varies, extremely severe and persistent vomiting can cause dehydration and may be indicative of a serious condition called *hyperemesis gravidarum*—if you have not been able to keep anything down, including fluids, for a prolonged period of time, consult your doctor immediately.

Heartburn is caused by changing hormone levels and when the baby places pressure on the digestive organs. This makes foods and acids back up from the stomach to the esophagus. But there are some things that you can do to help ease your symptoms:

- Eat six to eight small meals or snacks rather than three large meals a day
- Eat slowly and be relaxed
- Drink fluids between meals, but not with meals
- Avoid acidic foods/beverages such as citrus and coffee
- Do not lie down right after eating
- At bedtime, sleep with your head higher than your feet
- Keep a record of foods that might be causing you heartburn
- Do not eat any food a few hours before bedtime

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Talk with your doctor before taking any medicinal or herbal remedy.

Constipation is difficulty in passing stool. Constipation is caused by higher levels of hormones that make digestion slow down. Also, muscles relax and adapt to the expanded uterus. To help decrease constipation:

- Eat whole grain foods, fruits, vegetables, and legumes or dry beans, all of which are high in fiber
- Drink plenty of water
- Try natural laxatives such as dry prunes, prune juice, and figs
- Exercise daily to stimulate normal bowel function



Preventing constipation will help to avoid another discomfort known as **hemorrhoids**. Hemorrhoids are swollen veins on the anus and can be very uncomfortable to the point of being painful.

Swelling/fluid retention causes discomfort to most pregnant women, especially during the third trimester. During pregnancy your body swells, especially your feet, ankles, and hands because the uterus is growing and can put pressure on the blood vessels in your lower body. Similar pressure against your bladder can cause **frequent urination**. To reduce swelling:

- Avoid standing in one place for long periods of time
- Wear comfortable clothing and shoes
- Reduce your salt (sodium) intake
- Avoid crossing your legs and elevate your feet while lying down or sitting
- Lie on your side during the day

Tell your doctor if your swelling is excessive. It might be a condition called preeclampsia or toxemia.

Breast soreness and tenderness is common during pregnancy. The breasts increase in size due to active milk glands and more fatty tissue. Also, in the third trimester your breasts may sometimes leak small amounts of the yellowish, thick fluid called colostrum. Colostrum is the "first milk" that contains antibodies to protect your newborn from infections. For improved breast comfort during your pregnancy:

- Wear a bigger bra size that fits appropriately; try maternity bras or nursing bras for more support
- Use gauze or nursing pads to absorb leaking fluid

Fatigue is common during the first and third trimesters. In the first trimester, your baby is growing and your body is adjusting to the pregnancy. Plus, your body is "working overtime" to provide the baby with nutrients. In the third trimester, again you feel tired because the baby is getting bigger and you have trouble moving and sleeping. Be aware, however, that feeling tired may be a sign of anemia (low iron level in the blood)—a simple blood test can check for this. Basic tips for avoiding fatigue include the following:

- Try to maintain a regular schedule
- Balance your activities
- Get enough rest during the day and night



Ask for a simple blood test at your next prenatal visit to check your iron level.

Backaches. As a pregnant woman gains weight in her stomach, her body balance changes, and this can strain the back muscles. The loosening of pelvic joints in preparation for birth also causes this back strain. To reduce backaches/back strain:

- Bend your knees to pick up things rather than bending down at the waist
- Avoid standing for long periods of time
- Do not carry heavy items
- Sit with a cushion behind your lower back or in a chair with comfortable back support
- Sleep in a firm bed, and on your right or left side with a pillow between your legs for support

- Take a warm bath or shower, try a pregnancy massage, or apply gentle heat to the affected area

Dizziness can be caused by many things, including the growth of blood vessels, the pressure of uterus, and body's food requirements. You can minimize this by:

- Turning on your side before getting up from a lying position
- Not skipping meals
- Avoiding long periods of standing

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