

Common Discomforts of Pregnancy

Backache

Cause:

As the stomach grows, the center of gravity changes and a pregnant woman has to stand with more of a curve in her back to counterbalance the weight of her uterus (or else she would fall forward onto her face!).

Remedies:



- Heat to back
- Back exercises
- Good posture
- Avoid excess lifting
- Use good body mechanics for lifting (lift with the legs, not the back)
- Sleep on your side with a pillow between your legs and under your upper arm
- Wear a supportive, low-heeled shoe, especially if doing a lot of walking or standing. Tennis shoes are best.
- Sleep on a firm mattress
- Swim, walk, stationary bike
- Keep weight under control
- If necessary to stand for long periods, put one foot on a low stool
- Wear a pregnancy support belt
- Speak to your doctor/CNM if you have severe pain and/or sciatica (pain running down through buttock and back of thigh)

Bleeding Gums

Cause:

Increased circulation during pregnancy

Remedies:

- Take Vitamin C
- Use a soft toothbrush
- Keep teeth clean
- Make a dental appointment if needed

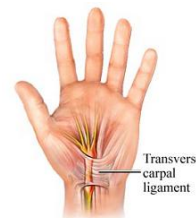
Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Cause:

Edema (swelling) of wrists causes pressure on the nerves that go to the hand. Goes away after pregnancy. Can be painful.

Remedies:

- Avoid repetitive movements or holding the wrist in extreme positions for prolonged periods of time
- Avoid activities that increase numbness, tingling or pain
- Wrist braces for sleep to keep wrists positioned properly
- Massage
- Vitamin B complex
- Rest hands 5-10 minutes every 15 minutes if doing repetitive movements like typing or knitting
- Flexor tendon exercises: hold arm straight out in front of you, shoulder height. Point your hand up and with the other hand, press the top 4 fingers back toward the arm to feel the stretch. Then point hand to floor and push fingers up toward arm.



- Speak to your doctor/CNM if these measures don't help

Constipation

Cause:

Most commonly, not drinking enough water and eating enough fiber. Also, pregnancy hormones decrease motility (movement of food) in the intestines.

Remedies:



- Increase water to 80-100 oz./day
- Exercise daily
- Increase fiber: whole grains, corn and beans, raw fruits and veggies with peel on, bran
- Drink a hot drink first thing in the morning
- Try to move your bowels at the same time each day
- If possible, have bowel movement when you have the urge. Waiting can make constipation worse.
- Metamucil taken with meals
- Prune juice before bedtime
- When all these things fail, talk to your doctor/CNM about medications

Dizziness

Cause:

Low blood pressure, low blood sugar, anemia, changing position too quickly

Remedies:

- Move slowly
- Change positions from lying to sitting, sitting to standing slowly
- Don't skip meals, eat frequently
- High iron diet or iron supplements

Edema (Swelling)

Cause:

Common in pregnancy. Not drinking enough water and being on your feet or sitting with feet lower than body for long periods are most common causes. Also caused by pressure of enlarged uterus on circulation. Should improve after a night's rest.

Remedies:

- Increase water intake
- Elevate feet when sitting
- Flex feet often
- Increase protein in diet
- Rest on left side 20-30 minutes 2-3 times a day
- Exercise daily
- Avoid tight clothing/shoes
- Sit in a warm bath for 20-30 minutes
- Swim
- Eat a low salt diet
- Eat watermelon, asparagus, and/or drink herbal teas
- Vitamin B6 50 mg. Three times a day
- Foot and hand massage
- Wear a pregnancy support belt



Fatigue

Cause:

Supporting extra weight, hormones, poor sleep due to baby moving, anemia

Remedies:

- No heavy meals late at night
- Support body well with pillows during sleep
- High iron diets; take iron pills if prescribed by your doctor/CNM
- Glass of warm milk or chamomile tea before bed
- Warm shower, massage before bed
- Medication if needed (talk to your doctor/CNM)



Flatus (Gas)

Cause:

Constipation, changes in digestive system during pregnancy, diet

Remedies:

- Try to have a regular BM each day
- Chew food thoroughly
- Take milk of Magnesia with meals
- Avoid beans, corn, cabbage
- Exercise regularly
- Avoid dairy products if you are lactose intolerant
- GasX

Headache



Cause:

Fatigue, poor eating habits, dehydration, virus, stress, and sinus/nasal congestion. Severe headache that doesn't go away with rest and Tylenol may be symptom of preeclampsia. Migraine headaches may be response to hormones of pregnancy.

Remedies:

- Deep breathing and relaxation techniques
- Close eyes and rest in a quiet place
- No skipped meals
- Walk in fresh air
- Avoid aged cheese (such as cheddar), chocolate, caffeine (coffee, black tea, brown sodas, Mountain Dew)
- Migraines may be treated with medication by your doctor/CNM
- Persistent, severe headaches which do not go away with rest and Tylenol should be discussed with your doctor/CNM

Heartburn

Cause:

During pregnancy, stomach acid can more easily travel up the esophagus (food tube) due to pressure from the enlarged uterus on the stomach.

Remedies:

- Eat frequent, small meals
- Remain upright for one hour after meals
- Rest and sleep with your head propped up on a pillow
- Wear clothing that fits loosely around the waist

- Chew gum
- Sleep with torso elevated (elevate the head of your bed or sleep with extra pillows behind your back)
- Chew well
- Don't overeat
- Avoid greasy, fried and/or spicy foods
- Drink skim milk, not whole
- Don't drink coffee or alcohol
- If you have heartburn:
 - Dried papaya, almonds, cashews, raw celery sticks, peppermint, lemonade
 - Sip soda water, milk or water
 - Eat a little yogurt
 - If you are lying down, sit up
 - Try this: stand with both arms straight at your sides and slowly lift your arms straight out to your sides and then continue up so your hands meet above your head
 - Tums, Maalox



Hemorrhoids

Cause:

Constipation, increased pressure on rectum from enlarged uterus, pushing during birth

Remedies:

- Increase water intake
- Avoid straining for BM
- Exercise daily
- Sitz bath
- Witch hazel pads
- Kegel exercises
- Rest with hips elevated
- Cold compresses
- Preparation H
- Wear a pregnancy support belt

Insomnia

Cause:

Baby kicking, leg cramps, stress diet

Remedies:

- No caffeine
- Decrease liquid intake after 4 PM
- Vitamin B in AM
- Increase fiber and complex carbs in diet, decrease fats, moderate protein
- Increase milk, yogurt, tuna, turkey, almonds, bananas, peanut butter, chamomile tea
- Relaxation tapes, reading
- Extra pillows for comfort
- Warm bath, massage
- Speak with your doctor/CNM if these measures don't work



Leg Cramps

Cause:

Lactic acid accumulation, vitamin deficiency

Remedies:

- Wear maternity support hose during the day
- Rest with foot of bed raised
- No sodas or lunch meats
- Heat (warm bath or heating pad for 15 minutes)
- Point and flex toes several times
- Increase milk to 3 cups/day (increased calcium). Do not drink more than 4 cups milk/day.
- Orange juice, bananas and mushrooms
- Vitamin B, Vitamin # 200 mg a day
- Calcium supplement if lactose intolerant

Morning Sickness

Cause:

Response to pregnancy hormones in the first 15 weeks of pregnancy. Usually starts improving by 12 weeks.

Remedies:

- Choose foods that are appetizing to you
- Starchy snack (like crackers or toast) before getting out of bed in morning
- Frequent small meals (every 2 hours). Don't let your stomach get too empty or too full
- Decrease protein (cheese, meat, eggs, nuts)
- Increase simple carbs
- Avoid greasy foods such as fried foods, butter, pastries, cream soups and chocolate
- Avoid spicy or heavily seasoned foods. Don't avoid salty foods.
- Soups and liquids between meals, not with meals. Sip, don't gulp, your liquids. If you can't hold down water, try lemonade, 7Up, peppermint tea or ginger ale
- Fresh air, short walks each day. Take deep breaths
- Suck on a fresh cut lemon
- Sprinkle ginger on your food
- Avoid getting overheated and sweaty
- Peppermint, ginger root or chamomile tea
- Avoid strong odors that make you nauseated
- Eat a starchy snack before bed at night
- No tooth brushing before breakfast
- No sudden movements
- Vitamin B6 50 mg. twice a day
- Sea bands
- If unrelieved or losing weight, talk with your doctor/CNM about medications
- If unable to hold anything down for more than 12 hours, call your doctor/CNM



Nosebleed

Cause:

Increased vascularity and congestion of mucus membranes lining nostrils

Remedies:

- Pressure to the bridge of the nose for 5 minutes uninterrupted
- Ice
- Vaseline in nostrils to lubricate
- If you have frequent nosebleeds, speak with your doctor/CNM

Round Ligament Pain

Cause:

Stretching of the round ligament from about 16 weeks on as the uterus grows. You may feel an intense, grabbing sensation or pressure in the groin or painful muscle spasms on the sides of your uterus.

Remedies:

- Avoid quick changes in position
- Avoid excessive bending and lifting
- Warm baths
- Prop up legs
- Heating pad
- Knee chest position
- Bend into the pain
- Stand barefoot or in low heels, feet together, one hand holding the back of a chair or on a wall for balance. Keeping both legs straight, raise one leg up about 2" by lifting your hip. Keep your shoulders and bottom of your foot parallel to the floor. Hold 6 seconds, relax. Repeat 10 times. Switch legs and repeat.



Skin Changes (Stretch marks, Linea Negra, Chloasma or Mask of Pregnancy, Pregnancy rash)

Cause:

Hormones, heredity, exposure to sun

Remedies:

- No prevention for stretch marks or chloasma (mask of pregnancy). Skin creams **do not** prevent stretch marks
- More common in brunettes
- Creams such as cocoa butter may lessen itching, stretching feeling
- Usually fade after pregnancy
- For pregnancy mask, avoid exposure to sun
- May use Sarna Lotion for pregnancy rash

