

COMMON PREGNANCY DISCOMFORTS

And What to Do About Them

Morning Sickness Morning sickness usually begins about the sixth week of pregnancy and gets better by the 13th week. Morning sickness probably happens because hormone levels in your body change rapidly during early pregnancy. Stress, not eating for several hours, or certain odors may trigger morning sickness.

1. Rest---Take more frequent rest periods and naps. Keep a slice of toast, saltine crackers, pretzels, or dry cereal at your bedside. It may help to eat something before you get out of bed.
2. Diet--- Eat smaller, more frequent meals to avoid having an empty stomach. Avoid highly seasoned, greasy fried foods. If food odors bother you, select foods that are eaten cold or room temperature.
3. Liquids--- When bouts of vomiting occur, take sips of clear liquids only. As the nausea passes, increase the amount of liquids to ½ cup every hour. Some examples of clear liquids are Jell-O, clear soft drinks (Sprite), apple juice, tea, and broth
4. Vitamin B6 and Doxylamine (both over the counter): taking 10-20 mg of vitamin B6 and ½ of a 25 mg tablet of doxylamine twice a day is the safest medication for vomiting in pregnancy

Heartburn • Stay away from greasy and spicy food • Eat smaller meals, but more often • DO NOT lie down just after eating • Elevate the head of the bed while sleeping • Any antacid: Maalox, Mylanta, Gaviscon, Tums. Drink plenty of water with antacid tablets as it helps increase effectiveness.

Dizziness • Change your position slowly • Get up slowly after you have been lying down • Eat regular meals/drink plenty of liquids • Do not stay in the sun • Report any dizziness to your doctor

Varicose veins • Avoid stockings or girdles with elastic bands • You may use support hose • Put support hose on while lying down • Take short rests with legs raised

Shooting Pains Down Legs • Change positions: If you are sitting, stand up; if you are standing up, sit down.

Lower Leg cramp • Elevate legs often during the day • Point toes upward and press down on kneecap • Apply a heating pad or hot water bottle for relief • Avoid heavy meals at bedtime

Congestion • Saline Nasal Spray • Cough Drops

Trouble Sleeping • Do not eat just before sleep • Take a warm bath before you go to bed or practice relaxation exercises

Feel Faint When Lying On back • Lie on your left side

Colds/Runny nose/Sore Throat • Warm salt water gargles, zinc lozenges, Chloraseptic Spray for sore throats • Saline nose spray and humidifier for sinus congestion • Benadryl

Cough • Robitussin Cough Syrup, expectorant or other over the counter cough syrup as long as it DOES NOT CONTAIN ALCOHOL.

Hemorrhoids • Tucks pads and ice packs • Anusol HC suppository • Preparation H

Constipation • Any stool softener may be used • NO LAXATIVES • Drink at least a gallon of water a day • Eat plenty of fiber rich foods such as fruits and vegetables, whole grains, high fiber cereal, and cooked dried beans • Colace 100 mg twice daily • Metamucil or Citracel are ineffective without the water

Diarrhea • Kaopectate • Immodium A.D.

Headache, Muscle Aches, and fever • Tylenol (acetaminophen)

Gas • Mylicon

Round Ligament Pain: Oftentimes women complain about some lower abdominal cramping on either side of their abdomen, during the beginning of their pregnancy. This is commonly called “round ligament” pain. The uterus is supported on either side by ligaments that stretch as the uterus enlarges. As these ligaments stretch, you may notice some discomfort upon arising from a chair or turning over in bed. It may feel as if something “catches”. This is normal and can be eased by moving a little slower and taking your time in getting up or moving, or wearing a maternity belt.

SEX DURING PREGNANCY

Sex is safe in normal pregnancies. Intercourse and orgasms will not harm the baby nor predispose toward premature labor.

For women, there is a wide range of changes in sexual interest during pregnancy. During the first trimester, particularly if there is nausea, bloating and breast tenderness, interest in sex often drops. As she enters the second trimester, interest in sexual relations often increases. By the third trimester, interest in sex often lags, and finding a comfortable position may prove difficult.

Men’s interest in sex during their mates’ pregnancies is also variable, but tends to remain high.

KEGEL EXERCISES

Kegel exercises strengthen the muscles around the vagina, urethra and rectum which helps prevent incontinence (accidents and leaking.) Your ability to control these muscles will be increased if you practice these exercises.

How to do Kegel Exercises

- 1) To locate these muscles, stop and start your urine when you use the toilet.
- 2) Try to tighten the muscles a small amount at a time, thinking of an elevator going up to the 10th floor, then release very slowly, one floor at a time.
- 3) As you tighten the muscles, you should feel the area from your urethra, where urine exits the body, to the rectum lift slightly.

When to Practice

- 1) Practice while you sit, stand, walk, drive, or watch TV
- 2) Do these exercises 3 times each day. Start with 5 repetitions and work up to 10 to 15 repetitions, 5 to 10 times a day.

EMERGENCIES

Most women do not experience problems during pregnancy. It is important to know how and when to get immediate medical advice if you suspect a problem. The following are reasons to seek immediate medical advice during pregnancy:

1. Any fluid leaking from the vagina.
2. Vaginal bleeding of any kind.
3. Sudden swelling of your hand or face.
4. Bad headaches or headaches that don't go away with simple remedies.
5. Changes in vision (blurred, flashes of light or spots before your eyes).
6. Dizziness or fainting.
7. Sudden weight gain (more than 2 pounds in a week).
8. Severe or continual abdominal pain, not relieved by a bowel movement.
9. Fever (temperature of 101 degrees or more).
10. Burning sensation while urinating.
11. Contractions or pelvic pressure, if you are less than 37 weeks pregnant.
12. Vomiting lasting 24 hours or more.
13. Decrease in fetal movement after the 28th week.

PREMATURE LABOR

Premature labor is labor that starts between the 20th and 37th week of pregnancy. Prematurity can be a very serious problem. If you know what to look for, you may be able to prevent your baby from being born too early, or give your provider enough time to improve the situation. Know these warning signs:

1. Uterine contractions which happen every 10 minutes or more often.
2. Menstrual-like cramps in the lower abdomen may come and go or be constant.
3. Low, dull backache felt below the waistline may come and go or be constant.
4. Pelvic pressure which feels like the baby is pushing down. Pressure that comes and goes.
5. Abdominal cramping with or without diarrhea. 6. Vaginal discharge may suddenly increase in amount, become mucousy, watery, or slightly bloody.

Should you be experiencing any of these symptoms, call our office at 903-676-3200 during office hours, or go to the emergency room in Athens immediately.

REDUCING RISK FOR COMPLICATIONS OF PREGNANCY

When you are pregnant, you need to be concerned about your own health and the health of your baby. Whatever you eat, inhale, or rub on your skin may affect the baby. Before coming in contact with any material, stop and think about whether it will have any effects.

Drugs: Do not take any drugs, street drugs, pills or medicines, prescribed or purchased “over-the counter,” without checking first with your health care provider. Some medications are safe and others are not.

Alcohol: Alcohol is a toxic substance. Babies of mothers who drink alcoholic beverages regularly during their pregnancy may have symptoms of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, characterized by tremors, sleep disturbances, mental retardation and physical changes in their appearance. There is no clear dividing line between what is definitely safe and what level of drinking is definitely harmful to the baby. It is therefore wise to avoid alcohol entirely during your pregnancy.

Smoking: Smoking cigarettes while pregnant poses significant risks to the pregnancy. If you were smoking before you realized you were pregnant, it is not too late to stop, avoiding most of the problems associated with smoking during pregnancy.

Toxoplasmosis: Toxoplasmosis is an infection that may cause serious birth defects to the unborn baby. To avoid infection with toxoplasmosis, a pregnant woman should always cook meat thoroughly and avoid contact with cat litter boxes or outdoor areas where cats go to the bathroom.

Caffeine: Limit caffeinated beverages such as regular coffee, tea, and cola to no more than one or two cups a day.

WEIGHT GAIN DURING PREGNANCY

Gaining Weight: Weight gain is normal during pregnancy. It is part of the body changes that occur. You need to control your weight gain if you want a healthy baby. In the first 3 months you should gain about 10lbs. After that, you should gain about ½ to 1 lb a week. Your total weight gain should be about 25 to 35lbs, if you are healthy and normal weight starting out. Overweight patients will need to watch their weight gain more closely and depending on your weight at the start of pregnancy your provider will adjust weight gain recommendations

Losing Weight: It is not good for your baby if you lose weight or diet during your pregnancy. Pregnancy is not the time to lose weight. You can lose weight after the baby is born. Ask your doctor for exercises. These can help you control your weight gain.

NOT Eating For Two: Pregnant women only need to add 300 Calories a day to their diet to take care of the baby. “Eating for two” is an old fashioned idea that is no longer true in developed countries. Gaining too much weight during pregnancy can put both you and your baby at risk for complications.

It is up to you to make good food choices for you and your baby.

EXERCISE IN PREGNANCY

Exercise is safe and encouraged in pregnancy if done correctly. Being in shape helps keep you and therefore baby healthy, it also helps with delivery. **The goal is NOT weight loss during pregnancy.** If you weren't exercising before pregnancy start slow and build up your stamina. **Listen to your body**, as it changes during pregnancy some movements and exercises may need to be modified

Examples of Safe Forms of Exercise:

- Jogging
- Bicycling
- Elliptical
- Aerobics
- Yoga and Pilates
- Swimming
- Light weight lifting
- Make sure that you still have the ability to speak in short sentences, if you are breathing too hard for this then back down on intensity a little

Examples of Unsafe Forms of Exercise:

- Heavy weight lifting (maxing out)
- Horseback riding (higher risk of fall and injury even in experienced riders)
- Most water sports (skiing, wakeboarding, etc)
- Cross fit (typically too high of intensity)
- Any form of exercise with moderate to high risk for injury/trauma