

## Help for Common Symptoms While Pregnant

Many women have symptoms in their bodies while pregnant. This is a list of the most common symptoms, with ideas to treat them. If these continue or get worse, please contact your care provider.

### Constipation

This is caused by the slowing of food moving through your stomach and pressure from the growing baby. Taking iron supplements and exercising less may add to this problem.

- Drink plenty of water to keep urine light colored
- Eat more fruits and vegetables and foods high in fiber such as bran muffins and other whole grained foods
- Drink prune juice – ½ to 1 cup each day or eat prunes or other dried fruits
- Take a magnesium supplement – 200 mg 2 or 3 times a day (maximum of 600 mg/day).
- Try to have a routine for bowel habits. If you feel the urge to have a bowel movement, be sure to go.
- Start or maintain an exercise routine
- Bulk laxatives like Metamucil® or a stool softener such as Colace® may be used
- Milk of Magnesia® or Miralax® is a laxative you can try if needed. Follow the directions on the bottle

### Backache

This is caused by a change in your posture. Hormones cause the joints and ligaments in your pelvis to relax. These changes may cause backache and joint pain. These tips may be helpful.

- Wear a supportive bra, low-heeled shoes and/or pregnancy support belt
- Use proper body movements – when lifting or moving
- Change your position often. Do not stay in any one position for more than 30 minutes
- Use pillows to support your lower back
- Put pillows between your legs when you sleep on your side
- Take a warm tub bath for 30 minutes with or without Epsom salt
- Have a massage
- Do pelvic rocking exercises or try doing prenatal yoga
- Start or maintain an exercise routine 3-4 times a week. There are classes and home based programs geared for pregnant women
- Eat healthy foods and a well-balanced diet
- Consider chiropractic or physical therapy treatments
- It is ok to use Tylenol® up to 1000 mg every 4 hours now and then. Do not take over 4000 mg in 24 hours.

## **Headache**

Some causes of headaches in pregnancy are changes in hormones, increased blood flow, changes in posture, muscle tension, eyestrain, stress, and fatigue.

- Spend 15 minutes twice a day using techniques to relax, meditate, breathe, or stretch
- Make sure you are drinking plenty of water
- Eat a healthy diet and have an exercise routine
- Wear comfortable shoes, use proper body movement and make sure your work station supports good posture.
- Rest in a dark room with a cold cloth on your forehead
- Avoid perfumes, cleaning products, or hair sprays that may cause headaches in some people
- Having massages, acupuncture, or chiropractic treatments may help
- Tylenol® up to 1000 mg every 4 hours may be used. Do not take over 4000 mg in 24 hours

## **Hemorrhoids**

Hemorrhoids are swollen varicose veins of the rectum. They are caused by hormone changes and increased pressure from the pregnancy on the rectum.

- Avoid constipation and straining to have a bowel movement.
- Take tub baths (sitz baths) 2 to 3 times a day for 10-20 minutes.
- Use witch hazel pads, such as Tucks®, for comfort and cleaning after bowel movements.
- Gently ease (reduce) hemorrhoid into the rectum.
- Apply a skin numbing ointment with lidocaine such as Preparation H® and follow directions on the tube.

## **Heartburn**

Heartburn can be caused by increased hormones, which cause the muscle at the top of the stomach to relax and allow stomach contents to back up (reflux) into the esophagus. To prevent, lessen, or treat this problem, we suggest that you:

- Eat many small meals throughout the day instead of 3 large meals
- Chew well and eat slowly
- Avoid greasy or highly spiced foods, coffee, colas, tea, citrus or chocolate
- Don't lie down for 2 hours after eating
- Avoid drinking too much fluid with your meals
- Sleep with more pillows if this is a problem at night
- You can try a liquid antacid like Maalox® or Tums® chew-tab. Follow the directions on the bottle or package.

## **Trouble Sleeping**

Many women have trouble sleeping, which can be caused by body changes or a need to go to the bathroom at night. Changes in sleep patterns can also be caused by hormone changes, stress or anxiety.

- Take a warm tub bath or shower before bed.
- Drink a decaf tea before bed such as Sleepy time®
- Use techniques to relax—progressive relaxation or meditation is very helpful.
- Talk about any fears with partner, friend, counselor or care provider.
- Use pillows to support good body alignment.
- Get daily exercise, but not within 4 hours of bedtime
- Eat a bedtime snack such as cheese or protein foods
- Read or write in a journal if you cannot fall asleep. Do not watch TV.

- Take a calcium-magnesium supplement at bedtime. That may lessen leg cramps

### **Colds, Flu, and Allergies**

When the first symptoms of a cold or flu appear, try to:

- Increase fluids including warm fluids that can help relieve a sore throat.
- Inhale steam from boiling water. Be careful to avoid burns. You may also take a warm shower.
- Gargle with salt water to relieve sore throat: ½ teaspoon salt to 1 cup of warm water.
- Balance active and rest periods.
- Avoid spreading the virus to others with good hand washing.

Over-the-counter products can be used **after the first twelve weeks of pregnancy:**

### **Sore Throat:**

- Chloraseptic® Spray and most throat drops.
- Nasal congestion or feeling stuffy from colds or flu (follow directions on the box and take only as needed):
- Plain Sudafed® – 30 to 60 mg every 4 to 6 hours (Do not take PE formula. You will need to ask the pharmacist for this as it is kept behind the counter).
- Chlor-Trimeton® – 4 mg every 4 to 6 hours.
- Saline mist spray as needed or Afrin® nasal spray – every 12 hours (avoid using Afrin® for more than 3 days).

### **Feeling Stuffy from Allergies:**

- Chlor-Trimeton® – 4 mg every 4 to 6 hours.

### **Cough or Sinus Symptoms:**

- Guaifenesin – 1 to 2 tsp. every 4 hours (do not take more than 8 tsp in 24 hours).

### **Headache or Fever:**

- Tylenol® – up to 1000 mg every 4 hours (do not take over 4000 mg in 24 hours).

### **Edema**

Swelling may be normal while you are pregnant. This is most common in your legs and hands towards the end of pregnancy.

These tips may be helpful:

- Wear loose-fitting clothes and comfortable shoes
- Elevate your legs for a period of time each day
- Avoid sitting or standing for a long time
- Drink plenty of fluids. Restricting fluids is not advised
- Spend 20-30 minutes a day in a swimming pool or a warm tub with Epsom salts

The Spanish version of this *Health Facts for You* is #5456s

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911 Copyright © 11/2017. University of Wisconsin Hospitals & Clinics Authority, All Rights Reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5456