



Discomforts of Pregnancy

Abdominal Pain

Abdominal pain is pain that you feel anywhere between your stomach region belly and groin. This can be from the growing and stretching round ligament.

Position changes and gentle exercise can help with round ligament pain. A diet rich in nutritious foods and fiber can help with pain caused by digestive complaints.

Call if you experience unresolved abdominal pain, bleeding, unusual vaginal discharge, fever, or other signs of illness.



Back Pain

Pain felt in the lower back region in pregnancy can be caused by a number of factors. It can be due to the shift in the woman's center of gravity as a result of the growing uterus. It can also be caused by hormonal changes, constipation, poor posture, improper lifting, urinary tract infection, kidney infection, lack of muscle tone from lack of movement/exercise, posterior positioning of the baby, or labor.

Avoid lifting with your back muscles. Use your legs to squat and lift instead. Warm or cool compresses can help relieve pain. Submersion in a warm bath of epsom salts can provide relief. Proper body posture is extremely important, especially during pregnancy.

Call if you experience back pain with tightening of the uterus or symptoms of a urinary tract infection (such as burning during urination).

Bacterial Vaginosis

Vaginal flora changes during pregnancy may lead to infections such as bacterial vaginosis. Symptoms of BV include vaginal discharge, itching, burning, swelling, redness, irritation, foul/fishy odor, or painful urination.

Good hygiene practices can help prevent BV. Wipe front to back after using the bathroom and urinate after intercourse. Daily probiotics can help eliminate BV by increasing the good bacteria in the vagina. Eliminate sugars from the diet and add yogurt, garlic, and apple cider vinegar.

Call if you experience unusual vaginal discharge, vaginal odor, vaginal itchiness, pain, fever, or contractions.

Bleeding Gums



Pregnancy gingivitis can cause red, inflamed, tender gums that bleed during brushing or flossing. Hormonal changes during pregnancy make women more susceptible to the bacteria in plaque that irritates sensitive gum tissue.

Practice good oral hygiene and get more frequent dental cleanings and checkups during pregnancy. Gum disease is associated with preterm labor so take dental health seriously.

Call if you experience a toothache or signs of gum disease, such as receding gums. Call if you develop a benign gum tumor that interferes with chewing or causes pain. These usually resolve on their own but can be removed if causing discomfort.



Breast Tenderness

During pregnancy, the breasts increase in size and weight and can cause breast heaviness and tenderness.

Wear a comfortable bra that is supportive and fits well. Warm or cool compresses can help with discomfort.

Call if you develop symptoms such as redness, warmth, localized swelling, fever, or severe pain.

Constipation

Constipation is common in pregnancy, particularly in early pregnancy. Progesterone relaxes smooth muscle of the large bowel causing decreased peristalsis, as well as changes in fluid reabsorption. The enlarging uterus may also displace and compress the bowel, this may contribute to decreased motility of the GI tract.

Increase water and fiber intake. Exercise regularly. Consume healthy oils (such as coconut, flax, or olive) and fermented foods. Avoid processed foods or foods high in sugar. Probiotics and magnesium can help with constipation. Elevate your feet when having a bowel movement and avoid straining.

Call if you experience constipation accompanied by severe abdominal pain, fever, or sudden weight loss.

Dizziness/Fainting

Dizziness refers to a sensation of motion, lightheadedness, unsteadiness and faintness. It can be caused by a variety of relatively benign problems. It usually results from a lack of oxygen to the brain and may precede fainting.

Stay well hydrated and eat a nutritious diet rich in whole foods. Rise slowly from seated positions. Avoid sitting with your legs crossed or laying flat on your back. Use caution when entering a warm bat or shower. Exercise regularly.

Call if you experience extreme vertigo, fainting, or visual disturbances.

Edema (Swelling)

Edema is swelling caused by excess fluid trapped in your body's tissues. Edema can be caused by increased blood flow & blood volume during pregnancy, hormones produced by the placenta which cause increased body water due to retention of extracellular fluids and sodium, decreased blood flow to lower extremities, dehydration (sodium & fluid depletion, hypertension, or preeclampsia. Normal pregnancy edema appears below the waist, is worse at the end of the day and resolves after sitting or overnight.

Drink plenty of water and increase salt intake. Epsom salt baths may help. Gentle foot massage (with diluted essential oils such as lavender) may help reduce swelling.

Call if you experience severe, pitting edema. Call if you experience edema before 24 weeks or in conjunction with sudden weight gain, visual disturbances, headaches, or other symptoms.

Fatigue

Fatigue is physical and/or mental exhaustion. As many as 95% of pregnant women experience fatigue in pregnancy, making it one of the most common pregnancy discomforts. It is most often present in the first trimester, and then returns again in the last trimester.

A healthy diet rich in B vitamins, iron, and fresh fruits and vegetables is important. Exercise regularly. Spirulina and Floradix may help reduce fatigue. Get plenty of sleep and consider relaxation techniques, such as yoga or meditation to help you relax.

Call if you experience excessive fatigue, malaise, fever, or illness.

Flatulence

Flatulence is an accumulation of gas that is expelled through the anus. In early pregnancy hormones are hard at work. The increase in progesterone slows digestion, providing more time for gas to be produced. As your uterus enlarges, your intestines are shifted and crowded in your abdomen. This slows digestion even more. Your expanding uterus also pushes on your stomach, which can increase a feeling of bloating. The muscle-relaxing effect of pregnancy hormones leaves you less able to control the passing of gas.

Increase fiber intake and avoid spicy or greasy foods. Exercise and probiotics can help improve digestion. Ginger and peppermint can be consumed in tea.

Call if you are concerned about excessive gas, experience abdominal pain, or notice blood in your stool.

Headaches

Headaches in pregnancy are often caused by dehydration, hypoglycemia, anemia, stress, and muscle tightness so attending to the basic physiologic needs can help ease them. Adequate water, food, sleep, and nutritional intake should be the first step in tending to headaches during pregnancy.

Light exercise, stretching, and getting circulation flowing can help relieve stress and muscle pain. Yoga, prenatal stretches, massages, and dry brushing can often assist in the prevention of headaches. Warm teas may help.

Cool compresses over the eyes may provide relief. Lavender and peppermint oil can be diluted and used topically on the temples.

Call if you experience a severe or persistent headache, especially when accompanied by swelling, vision changes, or increased blood pressure.

Heartburn

Heartburn is a continual burning pain in throat or upper chest. It occurs frequently during pregnancy due to growth of the uterus and slowed digestion.

Eat frequent, small meals and avoid spicy, greasy, fatty foods. Drink liquids at least 30 minutes after eating. Don't eat immediately before bed. Walk after eating to improve digestion. Raw almonds, apple cider vinegar, and papaya enzymes may help.

Call if heartburn is severe, persistent, or impacts your ability to eat or sleep.

Hemorrhoids

The distension of blood vessels in the rectum leads to itchy, swollen and painful varicosities. Prevent them by avoiding constipation can be achieved by staying well hydrated, maintaining adequate fiber and healthy dietary choices. Hemorrhoids can be internal or external and can become thrombosed. They may appear as dark purple lumps around or inside the anal sphincter.

Remedies include cold witch hazel compresses, analgesic cream, reinsertion of hemorrhoids with coconut or olive oil lubricant, and squats for core and pelvic muscle toning. Sitz baths can also be helpful, as well as application of refrigerated grated potato on the hemorrhoid.

Call if you experience rectal bleeding or painful thrombosed hemorrhoids.

Insomnia

Insomnia is a disorder that can make it hard to fall asleep, hard to stay asleep or both, despite the opportunity for adequate sleep.

Decreasing activity before bed by avoiding exercise late will help the body sleep. Providing full body support with a large pillow can be helpful as well as mindful meditation, hypnotherapy or listening to audio affirmations. Chamomile tea, Rescue Remedy, or lavender aromatherapy may help. Very often, insomnia in part due to hypoglycemia. Try eating before bedtime and keeping a high protein snack nearby; a glass of milk, nuts, crackers and cheese, or a yogurt.

Call if you suffer from prolonged sleeplessness or extreme fatigue or drowsiness.

Itchy Skin

Itchy skin during pregnancy is any irritating sensation on the skin that can be, but isn't necessarily, accompanied by redness, bumps, hives, or blisters. It is commonly found on the abdomen, breasts, hands and feet.

Avoid hot showers and baths, hot water can dehydrate and irritate skin, bathe in lukewarm water. Drink plenty of water, avoid harsh soaps or detergents, use aloe gel or coconut oil on dry skin.

Call if you experience sudden, generalized itchiness or develop a rash.



Leg Cramps

Sudden and involuntary contraction of one or more of your muscles in the legs and can make it temporarily impossible to use the affected muscle(s). They can cause excruciating pain, though they are generally harmless.

When experiencing a cramp in the calf muscle, flex the foot back toward the leg. Drink plenty of water and make sure you are getting enough sodium, calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus in your diet.

Call if the cramps are associated with swelling, redness, or skin changes or if the cramps do not improve with self care techniques.



Nausea/Vomiting

Nausea refers to the feeling of sickness in the stomach with an inclination to vomit and may or may not result in vomiting. Often referred to as "morning sickness" since it is frequently experienced in the mornings when the stomach is empty however, can be felt at any time of day. Usually appears around 5-6 weeks gestation and resolves around 14-16 weeks. Nausea in pregnancy is believed to be caused by hormonal changes.

Frequent small meals with protein and a carbohydrate may help. Ginger in tea or other forms can help reduce nausea. Peppermint oil can be used as aromatherapy during periods of nausea. Vitamin B6 can help reduce nausea and vomiting.

Call if nausea/vomiting are severe or if you vomit more than a few times per day. Call if you experience symptoms of dehydration or if nausea/vomiting don't resolve in the second trimester of pregnancy.

Pelvic Pain

Relaxation of the joints between the pelvic bones can cause discomfort and pain. Slight (up to 1 cm) separation of the symphysis pubis is normal but greater separation can lead to extreme pain. The symphysis pubis is composed of fibrocartilaginous tissue. As the joints soften, women may experience tenderness, particularly with movement.

Bed rest is the best remedy. Wrapping a tight binding around the hips for support may offer some relief. Regular chiropractic care or osteopathic manipulation may help. Avoid separating the legs (tailor sitting, deep squats, etc.) and keep knees together when moving (such as getting out of bed, getting into/out of the car, etc.). Acupuncture, TENS units, and muscle strengthening exercises may help.

Call if you experience severe symphysis pubis pain or separation.



Ptyalism (Excessive Saliva)

Ptyalism gravidarum is the excretion of excessive saliva during pregnancy. Excessive salivation may be related to an actual increase in saliva production or a reluctance to swallow saliva during periods of nausea and vomiting.

Some women may find relief from sucking on hard candies, sucking on ice, or chewing gum. Some women need to spit frequently. Carrying a small towel or receptacle can help.

Call if symptoms worsen or you experience signs of dehydration.

Sciatica

Sciatica refers to pain that radiates along the path of the sciatic nerve, which branches from your lower back through your hips and buttocks and down each leg. Typically, sciatica affects only one side of your body. Pregnant women may experience sciatica due to hormonal changes and increased uterine size.

The simplest remedy is to lie on your side, opposite of the pain. This may help relieve the pressure on the nerve. Avoid heavy lifting and minimize standing or sitting for long periods of time. If you experience pressure while standing, try elevating one foot and resting it on something. Swimming may also ease discomfort. You may experience relief by applying heat or cold to the troubled area. Chiropractic treatment can be crucial, as well as massage therapy and/or physical therapy in extreme cases.

Call if you have unresolved pain or pain accompanied by contractions.



Shortness of Breath

During the second trimester, hormonal changes cause this common discomfort. The enlarged uterus compressing the lungs during the third trimester is a common underlying cause.

Maintaining good posture and frequent stretching of the arms above the head can help ease pressure and aid in deep breathing. Other helpful tips: focus on relaxation, yoga, and deep breathing. Try swimming, regular exercise, eat a healthy diet, increase iron, and avoid excessive weight gain.

Call if you experience sudden difficulty breathing.



Stretch Marks

Stretch marks are a very common skin change in pregnancy, appearing in 90% of all pregnant women. They are reddish-purple streaks that appear at tension points in the skin surfaces which have been stretched the most as a result of the progressing pregnancy. They typically show up in the thighs, abdomen and breasts. As the deeper layers of the skin tear stretch marks form. They will eventually change from reddish-purple to silvery-white and fade substantially, but they are permanent and will never disappear.

Eat a healthy diet and stay well hydrated. Avoid excessive weight gain. Include gelatin, cod liver oil, vitamin E, vitamin C, zinc and bioflavonoids in the diet. Coconut oil or shea butter can be used to decrease itchiness as the skin stretches.

Call if you have sudden generalized itchiness or open sores.

Tingling of Hands



During pregnancy weight gain and edema can place pressure on the median nerve by narrowing its passageway through the wrist. In addition, changes in posture due to enlargement and increased weight of the uterus may cause misalignment of the head, neck, and shoulders in a way that places traction on the nerves of the arm. This abnormal pressure and traction can cause numbness, tingling, pain, and stiffness of the wrist and hands.

Wrist stabilization may help, particularly at night. Chiropractic care or acupuncture may offer some relief. Exercise regularly and avoid repetitive motions.

Call if symptoms worsen or interfere with normal activities.



Urinary Complaints

Frequency of urination is common during pregnancy, beginning as early as the sixth week. The uterus is still within the pelvic cavity and produces pressure on the bladder, simultaneously stretching the bladder base, thus stimulating the urge to urinate. As the uterus rises out of the pelvis (usually around the 12th week) many women are relieved of the increased urgency. In late pregnancy the uterus again presses on the bladder. This, in combination with the general relaxation of the muscles gives rise to greater frequency of urination. Slight urinary incontinence also occurs in some women near term.

Cranberry capsules and garlic cloves can help prevent urinary tract infections. Pelvic floor strengthening exercises can help reduce incontinence.

Call if you have symptoms of a UTI, such as blood in the urine or pain during urination. Call if symptoms worsen.

Yeast Infection

Yeast infections are caused by candida overgrowth and can occur on the skin, in the vagina, or on the nipples of a breastfeeding mother (thrush). Lesions appear as round, blotchy areas of redness with itching or burning. If rash has been present for a long period of time, it may peel revealing bright red shiny tissue.

Area should be kept clean and dry. Wear cotton clothing/undergarments or none at all so that the area can breathe. Increase water intake. Decrease sugar & processed foods. Rubbing apple cider vinegar on the area and patting dry once a day. Threading a piece of garlic and inserting in vaginally—leaving for 12 hours.

Call if symptoms have not improved within one week.



Varicosities

Varicosities are enlarged blood vessels with weakened valves. They are often found on the legs, vulva, and vagina.

Herbal nettle infusions may help. Horse chestnut tincture or cream may also provide relief. Compression stockings may be worn.

Call if there is pain, redness, or swelling at the affected area. Call if there is any open sore or drainage.



*Remember, you can
always call if you have a
concern!*

Pregnancy is a time of many rapid body changes and unusual symptoms. Many pregnancy complaints are completely benign and are considered normal. If you are experiencing discomfort, let me know and we can work together to help relieve your symptoms.