



## Minor Discomforts of Pregnancy & What You Can Do

Minor discomforts occur in most pregnancies and are caused by hormonal and physiological changes that are normal. This sheet describes some of the discomforts you may experience, the possible causes, and some easy suggestions to help you cope.

### Nausea and Vomiting

**Timing:** Usually lasts from 4-12 weeks gestation

**Cause:** Hormonal changes in pregnancy

- eat frequent small amounts of food you can tolerate throughout the day
- avoid greasy or spicy foods, or strong food smells
- maintain your hydration
- decrease stress levels
- eat crackers or dry toast before getting out of bed
- temporarily discontinue vitamins with iron, but continue with folic acid
- take vitamin B6 25-50 mg./day
- have a high protein bedtime snack
- eat a small bedside snack (nuts/dried fruit) if you waken in the night
- get out of bed slowly
- get help with housework/childcare and get more rest
- try ginger candies, ginger tea, peppermint tea, or Ginger Gravel
- see an acupuncturist for therapy

**If you have excessive and persistent vomiting, contact your midwife for advice/possible medications.**

### Fatigue

**Timing:** Common in early and late pregnancy

**Causes:** Hormones of pregnancy, increasing weight and pressure, low iron levels, inadequate rest.

- Increase rest, more naps, earlier bedtime
- Seek help with young children/reduce work loads
- Eat 5-6 smaller meals a day and exercise

**Consult with your midwife and have your hemoglobin checked.**

### Headaches

**Causes:** Stress/fatigue/hunger/hormonal changes/some pathological causes

- Increase fluids and food intake
- Rest/massage
- Reduce stress levels
- Tylenol may be used in pregnancy

**Consult with your midwife if headaches persist.**

### Heartburn

**Timing:** From 18 weeks to term

**Causes:** stomach acid gets into the esophagus due to hormonal effects.

- eat smaller more frequent meals
- avoid greasy, spicy, or acidic foods
- eat your last meal well before bedtime
- elevate your head or upper body while sleeping
- avoid bending over
- chew your food well and eat slowly
- eat yogurt
- Tums may be used in pregnancy



**Discuss antacids with your midwife.**

## **Frequent Urination**

**Timing:** Occurs in first and third trimesters

**Cause:** Pressure on the bladder by growing uterus

- Limit fluids in the evening hours
- Avoid caffeine products

**Contact your midwife if associated with burning, fever, or pain.**

## **Back Pain**

**Timing:** Occurs from 20-24 weeks to term

**Causes:** Increased weight pulling on back, poor posture, poor body position when lifting or bending, loosening of pelvic joints due to pregnancy hormones, urinary tract infections.

- rest more often/discontinue strenuous physical activity
- try yoga, especially the cat stretch
- be aware of your posture while standing/sitting/walking
- avoid standing for prolonged periods
- listen to your body/discontinue uncomfortable exercise programs or duties at work
- wear good quality shoes with supports/ avoid high heels
- bend at the knees when lifting objects or young children
- use a prenatal wrap/support
- visit your massage therapist/chiropractor/physiotherapist
- maintain a healthy weight gain
- try a warm pack or magic bag/avoid heating pads

**Consult with your midwife if your backache is associated with urethral burning, urinary frequency, or pain over your pubic bone, advise midwife if you have a history of back injury.**

## **Leg Cramps**

**Timing:** Occurs from 20 weeks to term

**Causes:** Poor circulation due to inadequate exercise or pressure, insufficient calcium intake.

- Take a calcium supplement 1200-2,000mg day
- Increase dairy intake and calcium source foods
- Elevate legs more often
- Massage site of the leg cramp
- Pull upward on your toes/foot, do not point your toes
- Increase walking

## **Constipation**

**Timing:** Occurs any time in pregnancy

**Causes:** Decreased motility of food through the body due to hormones, poor diet, inadequate fluids or fiber, white bread products, inadequate exercise.

- Increase fluids, 8-10 glasses of water a day
- Drink a hot cup of water 3 times a day
- Eat fiber, such as raw fruits, vegetables, prunes, prune juice and bran
- Avoid white breads, eat wholewheat products
- Decrease dairy products
- Metamucil and bulk producing laxatives may be used in pregnancy
- Avoid all other laxatives



## Hemorrhoids

**Timing:** More commonly occurring in second and third trimesters

- Use constipation prevention and treatment as previously outlined
- Do kegel exercises daily
- Increase fluid and fiber
- Warm baths or sitz baths
- Use a small stool to elevate feet with bowel movements

**Consult with your midwife at your next appointment.**

## Varicose Veins

**Timing:** More commonly seen from 24 weeks to term.

**Causes:** Hereditary predisposition, hormones of pregnancy and increasing weight and pressure.

- Use maternity support hose, put on before getting out of bed in the morning
- Exercise, especially swimming and yoga
- Avoid sitting with legs crossed or prolonged standing or sitting
- Increase rest and naps
- Use witch hazel compresses or Tucks Pad externally on vein
- Avoid tight stockings, or pants

**Consult with your midwife if you experience pain, swelling, redness, heat or tenderness at the site of a varicose vein.**

## Bleeding gums

**Timing:** May occur anytime in pregnancy.

**Causes:** Pregnancy hormones, lack of flossing.

- Visit the dentist for a cleaning and check up
- Floss and brush teeth regularly
- Eat foods high in Vitamin C such as fruits
- Use a softer tooth brush

## Insomnia

**Timing:** Occurring in last half of pregnancy.

**Causes:** Stress, urinary frequency, lack of exercise, increasing weight and pressure.

- Exercise every day, walking, yoga
- Fresh air in your sleeping area
- Avoid caffeine
- Take calcium 1200 mg before bed, other vitamins earlier in the day
- Have a warm bath or a massage before bed
- Use relaxation exercises or meditation
- Decrease fluids and food intake in the evenings after dinner
- Decrease stress
- Use a comfortable supportive mattress with lots of pillows
- Sleep in a quiet area away from family activity
- Do not use sleeping pills or herbals during pregnancy

## Bad Dreams

**Timing:** May occur any time in pregnancy.

**Causes:** Anxiety, subconscious fears, overtiredness, stress.

- Talk to your midwife or to a support person
- Do not watch violent or disturbing television programming
- Decrease stress levels/exercise
- Remember these dreams are not predictive
- Use relaxation and meditation techniques



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## **Sore Breasts**

**Timing:** Common in early pregnancy.

**Causes:** Hormones of pregnancy.

- Wear a good bra
- Handle area with care

## **Vaginal Discharge**

**Timing:** May occur any time in pregnancy.

**Causes:** Normal hormonal changes, yeast.

- Wear cotton underwear
- Avoid tight pants or hose
- Do not use feminine sprays or powders
- Bathe or shower often
- Consult with your midwife if burning, itching, or odour