

Common Discomforts During Pregnancy

While you're pregnant, your baby is growing and your body is changing quickly. These changes may cause you to feel uncomfortable at times.

This packet will give you tips on ways to relieve discomforts.

- Under each discomfort, you'll see a **list of tips** that you can follow to feel more comfortable.
- The **shaded red boxes** tell you when to call a provider. →
- The **green boxes** tell you some causes of the common discomforts. →

When to call a provider

Common Causes

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Important Phone Numbers

Emergencies:

call 911 or 272-2460
(OB Triage).

Questions?

Call your clinic.

Write your clinic's number



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Headaches

To make a headache feel better, try these things:

- Rest.
- Get a head and neck massage.
- Do neck rolling exercises.
- Drink peppermint or chamomile tea.
- Take 2-3 regular Tylenol or 2 Extra Strength Tylenol.
- Do not** take aspirin or Ibuprofen.
- Do not** eat MSG (common in Chinese food).

For sinus headaches or a stuffy nose:

- Put a hot moist towel over your eyes and forehead.
- Use a humidifier.
- Ask your provider if it is safe for you to take Sudafed. If your provider says it is safe, take 1 tablet of Sudafed 30mg every 6 hours.

Call OB Triage or your clinic if your headache is very bad, if it does not go away with Tylenol, or if it causes changes in your vision.

Common Causes

- Eye strain
- Stuffy nose or sinus congestion
- Hormone changes
- Tiredness
- Stress
- Dehydration
- Hunger
- High blood pressure

Dizziness

- Eat a piece of fruit or drink some juice **and** eat some protein—milk, cheese, peanut butter, or nuts.
- Change positions slowly.
- Drink more liquids so your pee is clear or light yellow.
- If you're anemic (low iron levels), talk to your provider about treatment.



- Low blood sugar
- Low iron levels (anemia)
- During the 3rd trimester, you might get dizzy if you change positions too quickly or lay flat on your back.

Nose Bleeds and Stuffy Nose

- Use a humidifier or vaporizer.
- Use salt water (saline) nose drops.
- Blow your nose gently.
- If your nose is bleeding, sit up or stand and squeeze your nose. You can also ice your nose.
- Put a thin coat of Vaseline in your nose, especially at bedtime.
- Eat more Vitamin C (fruits, broccoli, tomatoes).
- If you have seasonal allergies, try Benadryl, Zyrtec, or Claritin.

Bleeding Gums

- Use a soft toothbrush.
- Floss every day.
- Eat more Vitamin C (fruit, tomatoes, broccoli).
- Visit a dentist often to get your teeth cleaned. This keeps your gums healthy.

Lots of Saliva (Spit)

- Chew gum.
- Eat frequent small meals.

Common Causes

During pregnancy, you have higher levels of hormones. This can cause:

- swelling or bleeding in your nose.
- swelling or bleeding in your gums.
- more saliva in your mouth than usual.

If your gums are bright red, very sore, and bleed easily, you may have gingivitis (a mild gum disease).



Shortness of Breath

- Stand or sit up straight.
- Lift up your arms by your ears or over your head.
- Sleep on 2-3 pillows.
- Practice slow, deep breathing.
- If you're anemic (low iron levels), talk to your provider about treatment.

Call OB Triage or your clinic if your shortness of breath is very bad, or if it is so bad that you can't lie down.

Common Causes

- **Pressure:** As your uterus grows, it puts pressure on your lungs. This can cause shortness of breath. (This can be worse if you gain a lot of weight in pregnancy)
- **Anemia** (low iron)

Heartburn

- Eat small, frequent meals. Eat slowly.
- Drink fluids between meals instead of with meals.
- Chew gum for 30 minutes after eating.
- Take papaya enzymes or drink papaya juice.
- Take Zantac 75-150mg, 2 per day.
- Take Tums or take liquid Maalox or Mylanta (1-2 tablespoons 1 hour after eating and at bedtime).
- Do not** overeat.
- Do not** eat spicy or greasy food, like take-out food.
- Do not** lie down after eating.
- Do not** drink coffee or smoke cigarettes.
- Do not** use baking soda or Alka-Seltzer.



Heartburn happens when the valve of your stomach lets acid into your esophagus (the tube that connects your throat to your stomach).

- **Pressure:** As your uterus grows, it pushes up on the stomach. This can make acid go into your esophagus.
- **Hormones:** You have a hormone that relaxes your muscles during pregnancy called progesterone. This hormone also relaxes the stomach valve.

Backaches

- Use a firm mattress.
- Take warm baths.
- Get a back rub or massage.
- Sit and stand with good posture.
- Use a heating pad or hot water bottle.
- Take 2-3 regular Tylenol or 2 Extra Strength Tylenol.
- Wear a supportive bra.
- When you get up from lying down, roll to your side and push up with your hands.
- When you lift something, bend from your knees, not from your back.
- Wear shoes with low heels or no heels.
- Try using a maternity belt.

Upper back exercises

- Roll your head around.
- Shrug your shoulders.
- Do arm circles.
- Do prenatal yoga.

Lower back exercises

- Lay down and rock your pelvis back and forth.
- Knee-chest twist.
- Swim.
- Do prenatal yoga.



Maternity belt



Knee-chest twist

Common Causes

The growth of your uterus can cause back pain because:

- your center of gravity shifts forward
- ligaments connecting your low back to your uterus can get pulled

This can get worse if you gain a lot of weight during pregnancy.

Call OB Triage or your clinic if you have back pain on 1 side, fever, chills, or pain when you pee. These could be signs of a kidney infection.



Nausea and Throwing Up

- Eat crackers or dry toast before getting out of bed.
- Eat protein during the day and before going to bed. Protein takes longer to digest and will keep your stomach full.
- Drink fluids between meals instead of with meals.
- Drink mint, ginger, or chamomile tea.
- Go outside for fresh air and exercise.

Pain in Groin, Lower Stomach, or Sides of Your Uterus

- Try a heating pad or a warm bath.
- Rest.
- Take 2-3 regular Tylenol or 2 Extra Strength Tylenol.
- Do pelvic rocking exercises.
- Put a pillow between your legs and under your stomach when you rest.
- Use a maternity belt if you have weak stomach muscles.
- Bend towards the side that you're having pain.
- Do not** twist, lift heavy things, or make sudden movements.



Common Causes

- Pregnancy hormones
- Changes to your body

- Stretching of the ligaments that are attached to your uterus.
- Sudden movements (by you or your baby) or changing position can put pressure on the ligaments that are attached to your uterus. These pains can feel sharp and shooting.

Braxton-Hicks Contractions

Braxton-Hicks contractions are contractions of the uterus that help your body prepare for labor. They are irregular and often painless. As you get closer to your due date, they help soften your cervix. These contractions aren't false contractions, nor are they actual labor contractions.

To slow or ease Braxton-Hicks contractions:

- Drink more fluids and eat something.
- Take a warm bath.
- Relax.
- Do breathing exercises.
- Take 2-3 regular Tylenol or 2 Extra Strength Tylenol.

You might have Braxton-Hicks contractions more often if you are:

- Dehydrated
- Stressed
- Doing a lot of physical activity

Call your provider if you have tried to do everything in this list, you're less than 35 weeks pregnant, **and** you're having more than 4-6 contractions an hour.



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Constipation

- Drink 8-10 glasses of water a day.
- Eat more fiber—bran, prunes, figs, fruit, vegetables, cereals, and whole grains.
- Do more exercise.
- Drink warm herbal tea or water when you wake up. This can make your digestive system more active.
- Raise your feet on a stool when pooping.
- If recommended by your provider, take Metamucil with 8 ounces of water or juice.
- If recommended by your provider, take Colace 100mg 1-2 times a day to help soften your poop.
- Do not** take a laxative without talking to your provider.



Common Causes

- Pregnancy hormones cause your food to move more slowly through your intestines
- Dehydration
- Lack of exercise
- Taking iron pills

Hemorrhoids

- Try to prevent constipation (see above).
- Try witch hazel pads or Epsom salt compresses on the hemorrhoids.
- Take warm baths.
- Do Kegel exercises.
- Use an ice bag.
- Use Anusol or Preparation H cream or suppositories 3 times a day.

- Pressure from your uterus
- Constipation

Peeing Often or When Coughing or Sneezing

- Drink more during the day and less at night.
- Do Kegel exercises.
- Wear a mini pad.

Talk to your provider if it hurts to pee.

Talk to your provider if discharge burns, itches, or smells.

- As your uterus grows, it puts pressure on your bladder. This is most common in the 1st and 3rd trimesters.
- Bladder infection

- Pregnancy hormones
- Vaginal discharge may increase at the end of pregnancy.

Vaginal Discharge

- Use cotton underwear.
- Wear a mini pad.
- Do not** wear tight pants or shorts.
- Do not** douche (rinse out the inside of your vagina).



Leg Cramps

- Straighten your leg with toes pointed towards your head.
- Use a heating pad.
- Massage your legs.
- Exercise.
- Eat fewer processed meats and drink less soda.
- Eat more dairy products (milk, cheese, yogurt) or take a calcium supplement.
- Wear comfortable shoes with low heels.
- If the pain is shooting, change positions or get in a knee-to-chest position for a few minutes.

Tell your provider if you have one leg that hot and painful to touch.

Varicose Veins

Varicose veins are swollen, twisted veins that are usually in your legs. You can usually see them just under your skin.

- Sit instead of standing.
- Rest on your side with your legs up.
- Put on maternity support pantyhose (tights) before getting out of bed.
- Walk or swim.
- Do not** wear tight knee socks.
- Do not** cross your legs.
- Do not** stand up for long periods of time.



Common Causes

- Weight gain during pregnancy
- Changes in your circulation
- Pressure on the nerves and blood vessels that go to your legs. The pressure comes from the growing baby.

Veins are the blood vessels that return blood from your arms and legs to your heart. The blood in your leg veins is working against gravity. Varicose veins are common in pregnancy because:

- The growth of your uterus puts pressure on the leg veins.
- In pregnancy, you have more blood in your body. This makes it harder for your body to move blood up from your legs to your heart.
- Pregnancy hormones cause the walls of your blood vessels to relax. This makes it harder to move blood up to your heart.



Skin Patches

Patches of color can show up on your face, breasts, or stomach. They get lighter or fade after pregnancy.

- Use sunscreen.
- Stay out of the sun.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat.

Common Causes

Pregnancy hormones can cause changes in your skin. They can make some parts of your body even darker.

Stretch Marks

You may see stretch marks on your breasts, stomach, hips, or thighs. They will turn silvery after pregnancy.

- Make sure you're eating enough protein.
- Use lotions and oils. They won't prevent stretch marks, but they might make them less visible.

Scar tissue can form because your skin is stretching and growing during pregnancy.

Tiredness

It is common to feel tired in early and late pregnancy.

- Balance exercise with rest.
- Take naps.
- If you're anemic (low iron levels), talk to your provider about treatment.

- Hormone changes during early pregnancy
- Lower blood sugar and lower blood pressure
- Anemia (low iron levels)

Sleeping Problems

- Do relaxation exercises.
- Take a warm bath.
- Drink warm milk.
- Drink chamomile or peppermint tea.
- Get a massage.
- Eat more foods with B vitamins, like whole grains.
- Use extra pillows for comfort.
- Nap during the day.
- Do not** drink or eat caffeine (coffee, soda, tea, chocolate).
- Do not** use tobacco.
- Do not** take sleeping pills.



- Having to pee often
- Having an active baby
- Having a hard time finding a comfortable sleeping position
- Feeling stressed or anxious