

# Indigestion and heartburn in pregnancy

Indigestion and heartburn are common in pregnancy.

Indigestion is a bloated feeling you might have after eating or drinking. It can cause tummy pain and discomfort. Indigestion is also called dyspepsia.

Heartburn is a type of indigestion. It is a burning feeling, usually in your chest or throat.

About 8 in 10 women have heartburn during pregnancy. You're most likely to get heartburn in the third trimester (last 3 months) of your pregnancy.

Heartburn is uncomfortable, but it does not harm you or your baby. It is also known as acid reflux.

[What to expect in the third trimester](#)

## Symptoms of indigestion and heartburn

The symptoms of indigestion and heartburn include:

- burping
- feeling full and bloated
- a burning feeling in your chest
- stomach acid coming up into your mouth
- feeling sick
- vomiting
- abdominal pain

## When to get medical help

### Contact your GP if you:

- are losing weight
- are vomiting and not keeping food down
- have difficulty swallowing
- have any [symptoms of pre-eclampsia](#) (such as swollen hands or feet)

- do not get relief from medicine for indigestion or heartburn
- vomit blood

## Causes of heartburn in pregnancy

Heartburn is caused by stomach acid irritating (burning) the lining of your oesophagus. The oesophagus is the tube that connects your throat to your stomach.

### How acid gets into the oesophagus

During pregnancy, hormones can relax the muscle that keeps your oesophagus closed. The weak muscle lets food and acid move back up into your oesophagus.

Also, your growing baby can put pressure on your stomach. This can cause acid to move upwards into the oesophagus.

### Other triggers

Certain foods and drinks can trigger heartburn.

These include:

- high-fat foods
- spicy foods
- chocolate
- citrus fruit and citrus fruit juices
- drinks containing [caffeine](#), such as coffee, tea and cola
- [alcohol](#) (which is not recommended in pregnancy)

## What you can do to ease indigestion and heartburn

You can reduce symptoms by making changes to your diet and lifestyle habits or by taking medicine.

### Change your diet

Even making small changes to your diet can help ease indigestion and heartburn.

You should try to avoid:

- eating large meals - eat small amounts often
- eating 3 hours before you go to bed
- spicy, rich and fatty foods
- fruit juices and fizzy drinks
- having food and drink at the same time

- foods that trigger your heartburn

## Change lifestyle habits

There are things you can do to help ease symptoms, such as sitting up straight while you eat. There are also some things you should try not to do.

### Don't

- ✗ do not [smoke during pregnancy](#) (smoking can also be harmful to you and your baby)
- ✗ do not lie down immediately after eating
- ✗ do not lie flat - sleep with pillows supporting your head and shoulders

## Medicines for indigestion and heartburn

Talk to your GP or pharmacist if you think you need medicine. They can tell you what is safe to take during pregnancy.

The most common types of medicine for indigestion and heartburn are called antacids and alginates.

Antacids neutralise (balance out) the acid in your stomach. Alginates stop the acid leaking back up from your stomach. These are usually combined into 1 medicine.

### ⚠ Important

Tell your pharmacist that you're pregnant before taking medicine for indigestion and heartburn. Not all antacids are safe to take while pregnant.

Do not take antacids if you have low iron or take iron supplements. Antacids can stop your body absorbing iron.

If these medicines do not ease your symptoms, talk to your GP about other medicines.

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