

Swollen ankles, feet and fingers in pregnancy

Swelling in your ankles, legs, feet and fingers is common during pregnancy.

Causes of swelling

As your womb grows, it can put pressure on the circulation to the lower part of your body. This means that blood does not flow as well as usual, which can cause fluid to build up in your lower limbs.

During pregnancy your body also holds more fluid than usual. This extra fluid can collect in your legs and ankles, which can cause swelling.

It can also sometimes collect in your hands and fingers. This can cause them to swell. It may mean that you can no longer comfortably wear jewellery such as rings.

When to get medical help

Swelling that happens gradually can be uncomfortable, but it's usually not harmful to you or your baby.

Swelling that happens suddenly or with other symptoms could be a sign of [pre-eclampsia](#). This can cause problems for you and your baby if it's not diagnosed and treated.

Always see your GP if you suddenly become swollen or have other symptoms.

Contact your GP or maternity hospital immediately if you have:

- sudden swelling of your face, hands or feet
- blurred vision or flashing lights before your eyes
- a severe headache
- severe pain just below your ribs
- vomiting after 24 weeks of pregnancy

Swelling in pregnancy usually affects both of your legs, ankles or feet.

Always see your GP if you have:

- one leg that is swollen
- one calf that is red, hot or tender

These could be signs of a [deep vein thrombosis, or DVT \(blood clot\)](#).

Call 112 or 999 or go to your nearest emergency department (ED) if

you have one leg that is swollen, red hot and tender and you:

- have pain in your chest or upper back
- are short of breath
- are coughing up blood

How to reduce swelling

If you have gradual swelling and no other symptoms, there are things you can do that might help.

These include drinking plenty of water and being as active as possible. [Staying active during pregnancy](#) helps your circulation.

Swelling in your hands and fingers

There are things you can do to reduce gradual swelling in your hands and fingers.

Use cold compresses on your hands and fingers if they are swollen. For example, wet a flannel or face cloth with cold water and hold it around the swollen part.

Try not to wear anything that is too tight on your arms or wrists. For example, tight watches or bracelets.

If you notice that your rings are becoming tight, it's probably a good idea to take them off.

Tell your GP, midwife or obstetrician if you have any pain or tingling in your wrists or fingers. This could be a sign of [carpal tunnel syndrome](#).

Swelling in your legs, ankles and feet

To treat gradual swelling in your legs, ankles and feet, you should:

- avoid standing for long periods of time
- put your feet up when you can
- not cross your legs
- wear comfortable shoes

- drink plenty of water
- stay as active as possible

Foot exercises

Foot exercises can help reduce ankle and foot swelling. They can also reduce [leg cramps](#).

Try these 2 foot exercises:

1. Bend and stretch your foot up and down 30 times.
2. Rotate your foot 8 times in one direction and 8 times in the other direction.

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