

Common Discomforts of Pregnancy and Tips for Relief

- **Abdominal pain or ‘growing pains’**- this is very common in the first and second trimester. Can be sharp, sometimes severe, stabbing lower abdominal pain. This is typically caused by the round ligaments or uterine supports stretching.
 - Avoid sudden movements
 - Slowly get out of bed in the morning
 - Try wearing a maternity support belt which can be found at many online sites.
 - Warm (not hot) epsom salt baths
 - Call your provider if you get any persistent or severe pain.
- **Back pain**- thanks to progesterone and relaxin softening ligaments and joints, alongside a change in the center of gravity, a backache can be pretty annoying in the 2nd and 3rd trimester.
 - Pelvic floor exercises can help remedy this
 - Chiropractic adjustments can also help
 - Swimming a few times a week can help
 - Yoga, massage and relaxation techniques
 - Heat and cold
 - Sit on a birthing ball which can be purchased in the exercise equipment area of many retail stores
 - Try wearing a maternity support belt which can be found at many online sites
 - Float therapy (locally you can try this at Epic Floats & Wellness or Chautauqua Float)
 - Warm (not too hot that will cause you to overheat) epsom salt baths
 - Three Balances - stretching techniques. Details available at Spinningbabies.com
 - Reach out to your provider if none of these help to talk about management.
- **Breast/chest tenderness**- a common symptom of pregnancy due to increased levels of estrogen.
 - Wearing a well fitting bra and if very tender at night, wearing it to bed. Being measured for a proper size/fit bra is a good idea & can be done at Victoria Secret's or JCPenney
 - Making sure you wear a supportive sports bra when exercising
 - Avoid stimulation when having sex
 - Limit caffeine

- **Bleeding Gums**-this is also known as gingivitis of pregnancy
 - Warm salt water gargles a few times a day can help
 - Switching to a softer toothbrush
 - Continued flossing
 - Extra cleaning that is usually covered by insurance while pregnant.
 - If it gets worse, a referral to the dentist may be needed from your provider
- **Morning Sickness**- can be all day sickness, unfortunately but is usually limited to the first trimester of pregnancy. Frequently triggered by having an empty stomach or an overfull stomach
 - Try eating some crackers or pretzels as soon as you wake up. If you get up to the bathroom during the night, eat a few then as well
 - Eating small, frequent meals or snacks that contain protein throughout the day should help
 - You can take vitamin B6 25 mg three times a day or just 50mg before bedtime, can be helpful. Vitamin B6 25mg can be difficult to find in stores but is available online
 - Emetrol one tsp every four hours may be of benefit
 - SeaBands or wristbands based on an acupuncture concept for motion sickness are available over-the-counter and are helpful in over 50% of patients
 - Ginger can be helpful. This can be ginger capsules 250 mg by mouth 4 times per day, eating ginger snaps, drinking ginger tea, ginger chews or gum. Canada Dry ginger ale is the only one with actual ginger in it
 - If these suggestions are not effective, you should call the office as there are some safe prescription medications we can recommend and we may want you to come in for evaluation
 - If you ever have a 24 hour period where you cannot keep even fluids down, we recommend you go to the ER for IV fluids
- **Constipation**- experienced by about 40% of pregnant persons. This is another side effect of rising progesterone levels in pregnancy.
 - Increase fiber in your diet (dried or fresh fruits, prunes, whole grains, raw vegetables, flax seeds, chia seeds)
 - Drink hot tea in the morning to stimulate bowels
 - Brisk walks
 - Over-the-counter Citrucel, Solace, Metamucil, or FiberCon
 - Occasional use of over-the-counter Miralax
 - Daily probiotics
 - Contact your provider if you have blood in your stool, signs of preterm labor or severe abdominal pain.

- **Dizziness or fainting**- normal changes of pregnancy can cause increased blood flow to the baby but decreased blood flow to you.
 - Arise from bed slowly
 - Change positions slowly
 - Don't stand for long periods of time
 - Eat protein regularly to keep your blood sugar at an even level
 - Avoid laying completely flat on your back after 12 weeks
 - If for any reason you get chest pain or shortness of breath, go immediately to the nearest ER.
- **Edema**- or fluid retention causing swelling of your legs. This can be due to the increase in fluids in the body which can accumulate in the interstitial space (space that lies between blood vessels and cell). There is also pressure transmitted by the expanding uterus and growing baby onto your kidneys and pelvic blood vessels. This is usually very normal.
 - Epsom salt baths can increase relief
 - Foot massages
 - Frequent rest periods with lying on your left side
 - Herbal teas for fluid balance (Parsley or Dandelion)
 - Rest with feet higher than heart for one hour twice a day
 - Compression stockings (available over-the-counter at most pharmacies or online). If you are using knee high stockings, be sure they are not too tight around your calf or thigh.
 - Call your provider in the case of sudden weight gain, headache that does not go away with rest & Tylenol, spots or blurriness to your vision, or upper gastric pain.
- **Fatigue**- this is most common in the first and third trimesters.
 - Take a day time nap
 - Proper sleep hygiene: go to bed at a consistent hour, no screen time before bed, aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night
 - Modify your schedule if it's really busy and ask others for help
 - Eat at least 80 grams of protein a day and increase iron rich foods
 - Eat healthy, small snacks/meals at least every two hours to keep your blood sugar even
 - Iron supplements may be recommended by your provider if you are anemic
- **Headaches**- headaches are common in pregnancy
 - Chiropractic adjustments can help
 - Float therapy (locally you can try this at Epic Floats & Wellness or Chautauqua Float)
 - Yoga, massage and relaxation techniques

- Ice or hot packs to your forehead or neck
- Good hydration with water and electrolyte drinks
- Magnesium Glycinate 375 - 400 mg daily (available over-the-counter)
- Call your provider in the case of sudden weight gain, headache, spots or blurriness to your vision, or upper gastric pain
- Go immediately to the nearest ER if you have the worst headache of your life
- **Heartburn-** the backflow of stomach contents into the esophagus.
 - Papaya enzymes (available over-the-counter)
 - Peppermint tea or Marshmallow root tea
 - Ginger chews, gum, candy
 - Reducing fatty, greasy, fried foods
 - Don't eat close to your bedtime and don't lie down immediately after a meal
 - Over-the-counter Pepcid
 - Over-the-counter Gaviscon
 - Over-the-counter Maalox or Mylanta
 - Over-the-counter Riopan (a salt free antacid)
 - Tums (avoid if you have a history of kidney stones)
 - Contact your provider if this persists despite these changes
- **Diarrhea or upset stomach**
 - Over-the-counter Imodium or Kaopectate
 - Avoid Pepto Bismol
 - Bland foods
 - BRAT diet: bananas, rice, applesauce, tea and toast.
 - Avoid dairy products
 - Contact your provider if this persists despite these changes
- **Hemorrhoids-**common in pregnancy due to the weight of the uterus & baby on your lower rectum. Avoiding constipation is helpful.
 - Herbal or epsom salt sitz baths
 - Witch hazel 10-50% compresses, comfrey, plantain ointment
 - Over-the-counter Anusol or Preparation H cream, Tucks pads
 - Avoid straining when using the bathroom
 - Don't sit on the toilet too long
 - See remedies for constipation
 - Contact your provider if this persists despite these changes
- **Insomnia-** difficulty falling or staying asleep
 - How is your sleep hygiene? Too much screen time before bed?
 - Is your room dark, cool and quiet? Consider using white noise
 - You can try Chamomile, lemon balm, or passion flower tea

- Float therapy (locally you can try this at Epic Floats & Wellness or Chautauqua Float)
- Warm epsom salt baths
- Yoga, massage and relaxation techniques
- Occasional use of over-the-counter Unisom, Tylenol PM, or Benadryl
- Contact your provider if this persists despite these changes
- **Itchy Skin or stretch marks-** can be caused by the skin stretching
 - Hydration
 - Oatmeal baths
 - Cocoa butter, coconut oil, or plantain ointment
 - Over-the-counter Zyrtec can be helpful for itchy skin
 - Over-the-counter Benadryl cream or Hydrocortisone cream/ointment can be helpful for rashes
 - Contact your provider if you have a rash or lesions, or if your palms or the bottoms of your feet itch
- **Leg cramps-** painful spasm in the lower legs
 - Increase dietary sources of magnesium and calcium
 - Regular activity
 - Warm towels around legs
 - Magnesium Glycinate 375 - 400 mg daily (available over-the-counter)
 - Magnesium sprays or creams to your lower legs before bed
 - Call your provider if there is an increase of spasms, swelling, pain or redness in the leg
- **Ptyalism-** this is excess saliva that may cause nausea
 - Carrying a spitting cup
 - Rinse with mouthwash often
 - Sour candies can help
 - Contact your provider if it is leading to dehydration
- **Shortness of breath or pressure under your diaphragm-** this can be a normal change or pregnancy due to changes in your blood volume and the abdominal arrangement of your organs
 - Good posture
 - Lifting arms over head to catch a bigger breath
 - Sleeping in an upright position
 - Side-lying release technique (details available at Spinningbabies.com)
 - Go immediately to the nearest ER if this continues despite these changes, becomes severe, you start coughing, having heart palpitations, chest pain, fever, chills or feel faint
- **Tingling of hands-** also known as carpal tunnel syndrome
 - Hand splints or carpal tunnel braces can help. Available over-the-counter

- Avoid extreme flexion or extension
- Don't use vibrating tools
- Massage and gently stretch fingers
- Chiropractic care can help
- Place a cold pack in your hand with a warm pack in your armpit while keeping your arm above your head for 10-20 minutes and this may encourage the excess fluid to drain into your lymphatic system
- Contact your provider if this persists despite these changes as you may need a physical therapy referral
- **Urinary Incontinence-** when you gotta go, you gotta go!
 - Empty bladder frequently
 - Do kegel exercises
 - Panty liners or absorbent underwear
 - Maternity support belt can help
 - Make an appointment with a Pelvic Floor Physical Therapist (contact us for a list of local providers)
 - Contact your provider if you think you have a UTI or bladder infection
- **Vaginal discharge-** excess secretion from the vagina can be normal due to the pregnancy hormones. Discharge should be clear or white.
 - Wear panty liners and change when needed throughout the day
 - Have extra pairs of underwear to change into when needed throughout the day
 - Shower twice a day. No soap inside your vagina is necessary. Use a mild soap without fragrance or dye on the outside of your vagina
 - If you believe this is a yeast infection, you may use over-the-counter Monistat 7, Clotrimazole, or Miconazole. Daily probiotics are also encouraged
 - Contact your provider if you have odor, itching, burning, yellow or green discharge, or you treated for a yeast infection and it still persists
 - Go to Labor & Delivery if you think your water has broken
- **Varicosities-** large and superficial veins, usually in the thigh or calf.
 - Elevate legs whenever possible
 - Compression stockings (available over-the-counter at most pharmacies or online). If you are using knee high stockings, be sure they are not too tight around your calf or thigh.
 - Avoid standing for long periods
 - Avoid crossing legs when seated
 - Walk daily to stimulate your leg muscles
 - Limit weight gain based on your BMI and recommendations by your provider

- Contact your provider if there is swelling, pain, or redness in the legs
- **Seasonal Allergies**
 - Over-the-counter Claritin, Allegra, or Zyrtec
- **Upper Respiratory Infection, Covid, or a common cold**
 - Salt water gargles
 - Vicks vapor rub, vaporizer, or humidifier
 - Saline nasal spray or drops
 - Hot tea with honey and/or lemon
 - Cepacol lozenges for sore throat
 - Cough drops
 - Robitussin for deep cough or sore throat
 - Sudafed for stuffy nose, ears, sinuses. DO NOT USE IF YOU HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
 - Tylenol for aches, pain or if persistent fever
 - Mucinex for cough and sore throat
 - Throat culture in our office, at your family doctor, or Urgent Care if severe sore throat
 - Contact your provider if symptoms persist despite these tips for relief
 - Go immediately to the nearest ER if chest pain, shortness of breath, high fever

Resources:

Brucker, M. C. (2022). *Varney's midwifery* (5th ed.). J&BL.

Jordan, R. G., Farley, C. L., & Grace, K. T. (2018). *Prenatal and postnatal care*. Wiley.

Tharpe, N. (2012). *Clinical practice guidelines for midwifery & women's health* (4th ed.).

Jones & Bartlett Learning.