

Lane Women's Health Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy



Problems Encountered in Many Pregnancies

Anemia: This is when your red blood cell count is low. There are different types of anemia, but in pregnancy we often see iron deficiency anemia due to the demands of the baby because the baby takes some of your iron to make its own red blood cells. If you become anemic in pregnancy, we may recommend taking iron supplements or even getting iron through an IV. Please see the list below of foods that contain iron. You will absorb iron better if you are also getting enough vitamin C in your diet and if you avoid taking it with foods that are high in calcium, primarily dairy products. Iron supplements are poorly absorbed and can cause side effects such as constipation. Some over-the-counter iron supplements have vitamin C in them such as Vitron C and hemagenics.

Some foods containing iron:

Cereals fortified with iron	Beef/chicken liver
Turkey, Beef, chicken	Almonds, cashews, pecans, walnuts
Raisins, oatmeal, eggs	Tofu, sardines

Spinach (boiled), beans, strawberries, tomatoes, apricots

Morning Sickness: This is a common, distressing, but usually self-limited and benign problem that often is limited to the first trimester of pregnancy. Morning sickness seems to be triggered by having an empty stomach. If you suffer from morning sickness, eating some crackers as soon as you wake up, eating small frequent meals and small protein snacks should help. Taking 2 vitamin B6 tablets before bedtime, and Emetrol one tsp every four hours may be of benefit. Wrist bands (based on an acupuncture concept for motion sickness) are available over-the-counter and are helpful in over 50% of patients. Ginger capsules 250mg by mouth 4 times per day or eating ginger snaps, drinking ginger tea or ginger ale may also help. If these measures 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 further evaluation.

Vaginal Bleeding: Vaginal bleeding is never considered “normal” in pregnancy. There are reasons for small amounts of vaginal bleeding that may be of no consequence such as when the embryo implants in the uterus or after sex. We recommend that you notify us of any vaginal bleeding so that we may advise you as to the need for further evaluation. If you are bleeding heavily you should go directly to the hospital for evaluation.

Shortness of Breath, Palpitations, Chest Pain: This occurs in mild form in pregnancy in most women primarily due to the changes in your blood volume and the extra work of your heart. If, however, any of these symptoms should become severe we recommend that you go directly to the emergency room.

Swelling (edema): Pressure exerted in the pelvis on the large blood vessels and kidneys may cause swelling in the legs. This is common as the pregnancy progresses and is usually not worrisome. However, it can be a sign of other conditions including preeclampsia which is a condition some women develop in pregnancy that can be quite severe. Please notify us if the swelling is worsening or if you are having headaches, visual changes, or generally not feeling well. It would also be important to notify us if you see swelling in only 1 leg.

Yeast Infections: If you’ve had a yeast infection in the past you know that it can be aggravating with symptoms of itching and irritation in or near the vagina and an increase in discharge which is usually white and clumpy. Women have discharge in pregnancy normally and yeast is a normal organism that lives in the vagina, but if you notice this type of discharge and are having symptoms and have used over-the-counter yeast creams in the past you may do so. Some examples of yeast treatments are miconazole, clotrimazole, Monistat. It is most useful to apply the cream using your fingertips to the lower vagina and outside area a few times a day for about a week. This will settle the symptoms down.

Beta Strep (Group B Strep aka GBS): This is a normal bacteria that inhabits our digestive tract and vagina. It can be transient or persistently present in those parts of the body and it is not an infection. If it is in the urine, it is an infection (bladder infection aka UTI) and will require treatment. We check the urine early in pregnancy and if it is positive for GBS in a specific quantity you will be given antibiotics. You will also be given antibiotics in labor to prevent infection in your baby. If it is not found in your urine then you will be retested with a vaginal exam at approximately 37 weeks. This is done to determine if you need antibiotics in labor. The antibiotics in labor will reduce the chance of the baby getting the GBS and developing a severe infection.

Other Common Conditions that Occur in Pregnancy

We strongly recommend that as few medications as possible, prescription or over-the-counter, be taken during the pregnancy; however, occasionally treatment will be required. Listed below are conservative treatments generally considered safe for both mother and baby. If conservative treatment is ineffective after 48 hours, we recommend contacting the office to make sure no serious problem is present.

Resources for medication questions:

Pregnancy Risk Network Information: 1 800-724-2454 or www.pregnancyrisknetwork.org

We have very good local pharmacists who are also happy to answer your questions.

Additionally, should you go to Urgicare or the ER for any problem that does not seem to be directly related to the pregnancy we ask that you advise us of this.

Upper Respiratory Infection: Usually the “common cold”. You should rest, increase fluids and follow good hand-washing regimens. You may use salt water gargles, Vicks vapor rub, vaporizer or humidifier as well as saline nasal spray or drops. You can take Tylenol, Robitussin for cough/sore throat, Sudafed for stuffy nose or sinus congestion as long as you do not have high blood pressure, and you may use cough drops.

Seasonal Allergies: Benadryl, Claritin, Zyrtec, Allegra

Headaches: Drink plenty of fluids, try neck and shoulder massage. You may take Tylenol (acetaminophen). Do not use ibuprofen or other NSAIDs (i.e. advil, motrin, aleve) or aspirin. *Note: aspirin is given to many high-risk pregnant women in low doses, but we avoid it for a simple headache.

Upset Stomach: Gelusil is recommended along with a bland diet (BRAT diet -Bananas, rice, applesauce, toast/tea).

Heartburn: Frequent small meals are better than 3 large meals/day as the stomach and intestines work very slowly in pregnancy. Additionally try to remain upright or sitting for an hour or 2 after eating. You may try Riopan, Tums (unless you have a history of kidney stones), Pepcid, Gaviscon, Maalox, Mylanta

Diarrhea: Imodium is recommended, but call if the diarrhea persists more than 1-2 days or if you have been on antibiotics recently. Kaopectate may also be used. Do not use Pepto Bismol. Avoid dairy products until diarrhea has resolved.

Constipation: High fiber foods, water, vegetables, flax seeds can help. Citrucel, Colace, Metamucil, Fibercon may be used. Daily probiotics can be very helpful.

Hemorrhoids: Preparation H or generic, Witch Hazel, Anusol. Treat constipation.

Rashes: If otherwise feeling well you may use Benadryl cream, hydrocortisone cream/ointment, oatmeal baths. If these are ineffective after a few days please call.

Sleep – Good sleep habits including no late meals, keeping a routine. Tylenol PM or Unisom may help.



Weight Gain During Pregnancy

How much weight should I gain during my pregnancy?

The healthiest weight gain for you during pregnancy depends on your body mass index (BMI) before you were pregnant. Your BMI is based on your height and weight. Your BMI number will tell you if you are underweight, normal, overweight, or obese. You can use the chart at the top of the next page to find your BMI number. If you have a BMI of 25 or more before you start pregnancy, it is healthiest if you gain less weight during pregnancy.

Prepregnancy Weight	Healthy Weight Gain During Pregnancy
Underweight (BMI less than 18.5)	28 to 40 pounds
Normal (BMI between 18.5 and 24.9)	25 to 35 pounds
Overweight (BMI between 25 and 29.9)	15 to 25 pounds
Obese (BMI 30 or more)	11 to 20 pounds

How much should I eat during pregnancy?

In the first trimester of pregnancy, many women feel nauseous (sick to your stomach) or cannot stand some food smells. This can make it hard to eat a regular meal. When you are pregnant, you need to eat about 400 more calories per day than when you are not pregnant. You will feel better if you eat something every few hours. Eating small meals 5 or 6 times each day rather than larger meals less often will help you feel better and make sure your baby has a steady supply of food.

What should I eat during pregnancy?

Your baby's growth depends on what you eat, so you need to eat healthy foods. Eat at least 5 servings of fruit and vegetables a day. Eat whole grain foods such as brown rice or whole wheat bread. Include some protein, such as meat or peanut butter, whenever you eat. Cut down on fats by eating less fried foods, whole milk, and fatty meats. Limit foods with a lot of sugar, such as desserts and soft drinks.

What happens if I do not gain enough weight?

If you do not gain enough weight or if you lose weight during pregnancy, your baby has a chance of being born prematurely (early) or not weighing enough at birth. Babies born early or too small can have trouble breathing and eating in the first days after birth. A small number of babies who are premature or too small at birth have trouble learning when they are older and in school. Talk with your health care provider about how much weight gain during your pregnancy is the healthiest for you and your baby.

What happens if I gain too much weight?

If you gain more weight than is recommended, you have a higher chance of getting gestational diabetes or high blood pressure during pregnancy. Your baby has a chance of weighing more than usual, and you are more likely to need a cesarean birth. Women who gain too much weight in pregnancy have a harder time losing the weight after giving birth. Their babies have a higher chance of being overweight as children. Exercise during pregnancy and eating a healthy diet can help you keep your pregnancy weight gain normal. It is not safe to diet during pregnancy.



What is my body mass index?

You can use this chart to find your BMI number. Be sure to use your weight before pregnancy.

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

For More Information

Choose My Plate: Moms and Moms-to-be

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/moms-pregnancy-breastfeeding>

CDC: Weight Gain During Pregnancy

<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-weight-gain.htm>

Health Tips for Pregnant Women

<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/weight-management/health-tips-pregnant-women>

March of Dimes: Tracking Your Weight Gain

<https://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/tracking-your-weight-gain.aspx>

Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level: 5.5

Approved March 2018. This handout replaces “Weight Gain During Pregnancy” published in Volume 55, Number 6, November/December 2010.

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Exercise in Pregnancy

Is it safe for me to exercise while I'm pregnant?

Most exercise is safe for pregnant women. In fact, daily exercise during your pregnancy can help you and your baby be healthier and might decrease your chance of having some problems during pregnancy. If you had a medical problem before you became pregnant or have had complications during your pregnancy, you should talk about the safety of exercise with your health care provider before you start any activity.

How can exercising while I'm pregnant help me?

Exercise in pregnancy can help you in many ways. It can help you feel better and have less back pain, constipation, and tiredness. Exercise can also help you sleep better and improve your mood. Your body will be better prepared for labor. You may have a shorter labor with less chance of having a cesarean birth. You will gain less weight in pregnancy, which will help you get back to your prepregnancy weight more quickly after the baby comes. Exercise in pregnancy may also lower your chance of getting gestational diabetes or high blood pressure during pregnancy. Your baby is more likely to be born with a healthy birth weight. Exercise can also lower the chance of having postpartum depression.

How much exercise should I do while I'm pregnant?

You should try to do moderate exercise for at least 30 minutes most days of the week. Moderate exercise means you should start to sweat and your heart rate increases a bit, but you are still able to talk while you are exercising. If you exercised before pregnancy, you can probably continue the same physical activities. If you are not currently exercising, pregnancy is a good time to start. You want to start slow and gradually increase your exercise.

What exercises are safe for me to do while I'm pregnant?

Walking is a good exercise to start with. You will get moving and have less strain on your joints. Swimming, biking, yoga, and low-impact aerobics are also good choices. Light weight training is okay too. Being creative with your exercise will help you stay motivated. Hiking, dancing, and rowing can be fun activities to try. You do not need to pay money for an exercise class or activity. Walking up and down stairs or doing exercises at home are all good, free activities.

Are there other things I should consider when I'm exercising while I'm pregnant?

Be sure to stretch your muscles first and warm up and cool down each time you exercise. Drink water throughout your exercise so you can stay well hydrated. Make sure you do not get too hot, and do not overdo your exercise, especially on a hot day. During pregnancy, your balance changes as the baby grows, so it is important to move carefully and always make sure you are not in danger of falling. Avoid lying flat on your back. You can put a pillow or towel underneath one hip so that you can still participate in exercises that may require this position. Listen to your body for warning signs. See the following list for specific warning signs that tell you to stop your exercise.

What exercises are not recommended while I'm pregnant?

You should not do exercises that put you at risk for getting hit or kicked in the stomach or falling. Do not do exercises that involve contact with other persons or heavy lifting. Exercises to avoid are:

- Hockey
- Soccer
- Basketball
- Skiing
- Gymnastics
- Horseback riding



- High-intensity racquet sports
- Heavy weight lifting (over 50 pounds)
- Scuba diving
- Exercise at high altitudes

Use common sense. If you are not sure about an exercise, you should talk to your health care provider first.

Are there reasons I should not exercise while I'm pregnant?

You should talk to your health care provider before you exercise if you:

- Have a serious heart or lung disease
- Have high blood pressure before or during pregnancy
- Have premature labor or have had a threatened miscarriage during this pregnancy
- Have cervical incompetence (weakness) or have a cerclage in place
- Have placenta previa (your placenta is low or covering the opening to your cervix)
- Are carrying more than one baby
- Have had or are currently having any vaginal bleeding
- Think your membranes are ruptured (water is broken)

When should I stop my exercise?

Stop exercising if you:

- Have bleeding or are leaking fluid from your vagina
- Have trouble breathing
- Feel dizzy or lightheaded
- Have pain in your chest
- Have pain or swelling in your calf
- Have contractions before you are 37 weeks pregnant
- Are feeling the baby move less than normal

For More Information

Kid's Health

General information on exercise in pregnancy.

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition`center/staying`fit/exercising`pregnancy.html#>

<http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines/pregnancy.html>

March of Dimes

Video and written information on exercise in pregnancy.

<http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/exercise-during-pregnancy.aspx#>

Mayo Clinic

Exercises you can do at home that strengthen your muscles and get your body ready for labor.

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/pregnancy-week-by-week/multimedia/pregnancy-exercises/sls-20076779?s=1>

Parents Magazine

Low-impact yoga exercises you can do at home to prepare for labor and stay healthy.

<http://www.parents.com/pregnancy/my-body/fitness/prenatal-yoga-workout/#page=18>

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