

Common Discomforts of Pregnancy

Safe Simple Remedies

Symptom	Cause	Remedies	Things to avoid
swollen feet/ ankles	weight of uterus and dilation of veins in leg make it harder for blood to get back to the heart from the legs. This causes swelling and is made worse by standing for a long time or hot weather	Rest on left side, elevate feet frequently, exercise, wear loose clothes and shoes, drink plenty of water to help your kidneys get rid of extra fluid. Avoid a diet high in carbohydrates.	Avoid water pills and knee-high socks
leg cramps	caused by poor circulation, not enough calcium, pressure on nerves	increase calcium in diet; try a calcium supplement like Tums, stretch calf muscles by flexing your foot to relieve cramps, apply warm cloth or heating pad to muscle, put your feet up	avoid too much phosphorus in your diet
hemorrhoids	progesterone, one of the pregnancy hormones, causes the veins around the rectum to relax; pressure of the uterus blocks the flow of blood from the lower extremities; straining for bowel movements makes things worse	put feet on large book or foot-stool when having a bowel movement, drink plenty of fluids, have lots of fiber in your diet (whole grain bread and cereal, fruits and vegetables), get into knee chest position to ease pain, apply witch hazel soaked pads ("Tucks")	avoid straining and pushing too hard to have bowel movement. avoid cheese or other foods that seem to constipate you. Do not take laxatives!
backache	caused by strain of increased uterine weight on back muscles and ligaments, made worse by poor posture	stand straight, wear flat shoes with arches, sleep on firm mattress, try pelvic-rock exercises while standing and on your hands and knees. a maternity belt or sling might help	avoid high heels, fatigue
Shortness of breath	progesterone, one of the pregnancy hormones, makes you feel that you can't take a deep breath. pressure of the growing uterus on the diaphragm, and anemia can make it worse	stand up straight, sleep with extra pillows to prop upper body up	do not exercise to the point of fatigue
heartburn	growing uterus presses on the stomach, forcing stomach fluids to back up into the esophagus; stomach empties more slowly during pregnancy	eat several small meals instead of large ones; drink liquids between meals, rather than with a big meal; try papaya enzyme extract,	check with midwife before using antacids; don't lie down after eating; avoid greasy, spicy food, coffee, alcohol
varicose veins	progesterone, one of the pregnancy hormones, causes the veins to dilate or relax and not return blood to the heart as well	elevate legs frequently, walk daily, put on support hose as soon as you wake up	avoid standing for a long time, sitting with crossed legs, and knee socks with tight tops

constipation	progesterone, one of the pregnancy hormones, causes the intestines to slow down; bowel blocked by growing uterus	increase fiber by eating raw fruits and vegetables, and whole grains; walk; drink at least 8-10 glasses of water a day	avoid foods that you know make you constipated - cheese is a problem for lots of people; don't take a laxative!
sleeplessness	usually in the last months, caused by difficulty getting comfortable, frequent trips to the bathroom, worries and baby's movements	Take a warm bath, drink warm milk or chamomile tea at bedtime, try a turkey sandwich or a banana before bed; increase B vitamins by eating whole grains; use extra pillows to get comfortable, ask someone to give you a back rub, try lavender	do not take sleeping pills or tranquilizers, avoid coffee, regular tea, chocolate and colas
mild headache	may be caused by hormones, stress or eyestrain. Be sure to report severe or unrelieved headaches to the midwife	try neck rolling exercises, a "rice sock" on the back of your neck (a tube sock full of uncooked rice and microwaved until warm, lavender is a nice addition) , peppermint or chamomile teas, neck massage, wet tea bags on your eyes. Up to 3 regular or 2 extra-strength Tylenol are ok.	NO aspirin, NO ibuprofen (Motrin). avoid MSG (found in Chinese food)
Bladder infection	common in pregnant women due increased sugar and protein in the urine, delayed emptying of the urinary tract due to pressure from the uterus	drink lots of water or acid fruit juices (especially cranberry or orange juice) to increase your vitamin C. Cranberry extract (Cran-actin) may help. Clean yourself well after going to the bathroom. Be sure to wipe from front to back. Urinate right before and right after you have sex. Wear cotton underwear during the day, no underwear at night. Be sure to tell the midwife if you are urinating more frequently than usual, or it hurts when you urinate. You may need medication.	
vaginal infections (yeast)	more common in pregnancy due to changes in the vagina	same as for urinary tract infection; eat yogurt with live cultures daily; acidophilus capsules may be placed in the vagina	avoid a lot of sugar and refined flour products, like white bread . don't wear panty liners.
muscle spasm/ pain in lower abdomen or side	pressure of baby on nerves and pulling of growing uterus on ligaments; becomes worse as baby gets bigger and drops	try soaking in a warm bath or putting a warm/wet towel or heating pad (on LOW) over the area. use pelvic rock exercise or knee-chest position to relieve pressure	
numbness in fingers/arms	usually due to fluid retention putting pressure on nerves	sit and stand up straight, do shoulder circling exercise, sleep with wrists slightly bent up on a pillow	avoid lying for prolonged periods on either arm; avoid sleeping with your wrist curled up under you