



Healthy Families Homebirth

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Common Pregnancy Discomforts

Many pregnancy discomforts can be relieved with good diet, hydration, gentle exercise, and rest. Listed below are several common pregnancy discomforts. The recommended suggestions are a good starting point for improvement. If these suggestions don't provide relief, then looking into additional therapies may be helpful. The herbs suggested are safe during pregnancy, although talk to your care provider for any additional questions or concerns.

Back Ache

Size of the abdomen and breast increase the strain on the back.

Recommended: Wear a well-fitting bra; wear flat shoes, hydrotherapy and swimming, proper lifting techniques, belly lift wrap, sleeping with support between the legs and under the belly, warm or cool compress, Arnica oil or gel applied externally on the area.

Additional therapies: Massage, cranio-sacral, chiropractor, acupuncture, yoga, Dancing for Birth™

Colds, Flu, Fevers, Mild illness

Stress, over-working, eating a poor diet, and anxiety can all weaken the immune system. If you start to feel a cold starting, try to take a wellness day off from work. For example: turn off the phone, send the children to a friend's house, rest and rejuvenate. Usually a feeling unwell is a way the body is telling us that we are overdoing it and need to rest.

Recommended: Plenty of fluids and whole foods; rest during the day; gentle exercise, such as walking; warm bath; Vitamin C- not more than 2,000 mg per day for 5 days.

Herbal: Echinacea root, garlic, ginger, kudzu root, lemon balm, catnip, chamomile, raspberry leaf

Additional therapies: Homeopathy, Allopathic antibiotics

Note: See a physician or midwife if the following conditions appear: high fever, fever lasting more than 2-3 days, frequent vomiting and diarrhea, or persistent coughing

Constipation

Progesterone slows down the digestive system to increase the uptake of nutrients from food.

Check your iron supplement to ensure it is non-constipating and isn't increasing the problem.

Recommended: adequate fluids, prune juice, rest, warm liquids in the morning, eat more fibrous foods, avoid cheese, meat and fatty foods, general exercise, don't ignore urges, sit on toilet and relax- don't strain, squatting position on the toilet (can be done with step stools on each side, or practice on the floor until the urge to have a movement comes), probiotics.

Herbal: Dandelion and yellow dock root in blackstrap molasses syrup.

Additional therapies: Homeopathy, massage, suppositories

This is general information. Please speak to your health care provider about your unique health needs.



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Edema

Caused by a decreased venous circulation. This is normal and fluctuates during the day. Edema should be examined, if it persists all day and all night.

Recommended: avoid restrictive clothing, avoid sitting or standing for long periods of time, elevate the legs during the day, use an abdominal lift wrap, salt foods to taste and avoid processed foods, lie on the left side, gentle exercise, massage and foot baths

Herbal: nettle and dandelion infusion.

Additional therapies: Acupuncture, yoga, homeopathy

Fatigue

Common during the first trimester and usually resolves during the second trimester. Possibly caused by a rise in progesterone or from the slowing down of the metabolic rate. Stress and other emotional issues can cause fatigue.

Recommended: Try to take naps during the day, get mild exercise and eat a balanced diet.

Herbal: Yellow dock root can balance energy levels.

Additional therapies: Massage, acupuncture and cranio-sacral therapies are also useful.

Headaches

Low blood sugar and dehydration are the two main causes of headache during pregnancy.

Recommended: Eat frequent healthy snacks, drinking plenty of water, and possibly a nap will remedy this. Soaking the hands and feet in hot lemon water could help. Low iron can cause headaches. Take iron to increase oxygen to the brain. Visual disturbance can also cause headaches. Be sure to get an eye check to make sure your vision is correct.

Important: If the headache has any of these features, a medical diagnosis may be indicated: sudden onset, located in the forehead region, severe throbbing, getting worse or closer together in frequency, or combined with other symptoms such as high blood pressure, visual disturbances, and protein in the urine.

Additional therapies: Homeopathy, acupuncture, massage, cranio-sacral, chiropractor

Heartburn

Heartburn is common during the end of the second and through the third trimesters. It is likely caused by relaxation of the cardiac sphincter of the stomach, decreased gastrointestinal motility, and lack of room in the stomach due to the increasing size of the uterus.

Recommended: eat small frequent meals; maintain good upright posture, stretch your arms over your head to increase room for your stomach, avoid overly fatty foods, drink very little with the meal and directly afterwards, avoid cold foods with meals, spicy foods may aggravate heartburn, avoid eating a large meal before bedtime.

Natural aids: digestive enzymes taken before a meal can help break down the foods quicker and better; liquid calcium/ magnesium supplement, papaya enzymes or as a food, plain baked potatoes, thoroughly chewed raw almonds, cashews or filberts.

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Hemorrhoids

The uterus increases pressure on the bowels and progesterone relaxes the vein walls which can cause hemorrhoids.

Recommended: Follow measures for constipation, the two often come together.

Natural: Sitz baths, witch hazel compresses, using lubrication to gently reinsert the hemorrhoids back into the rectum- then practicing pelvic floor exercises. Resting with hips and legs elevated, warm compresses, support stockings. Don't sit for too long; for every hour of sitting do ten minutes of walking. If you stand for long periods of time, then stand up and gently rock, do figure 8s and hip circles with your hips (keep your knees bent).

Herbal: yellow dock root, Vitamin E suppositories, natural Vitamin C and B, nettle, Kelp, flax oil

Insomnia

Besides the everyday reasons for insomnia, such as concerns, anxieties, or anticipation, pregnancy can add additional physical reasons. An enlarged uterus and other physical discomforts can add to difficulty sleeping.

Recommended: Warm baths, a warm drink before bed (but beware that you may have to go to the bathroom more at night). Relaxing activities before bed such as reading a book, relaxing yoga, soft music, candlelight, and meditation/prayer. Take a calcium supplements or eat/drink calcium rich foods before bed. Eat a high protein snack before bed and have a snack by your bed so if you do wake you can eat a little and go back to sleep. Use pillows and props to help support yourself or consider sleeping sitting up.

Herbal: nettle, oatstraw, red raspberry leaves, chamomile, skullcap, lavender, lemon balm, catnip, and motherwort. Bach rescue remedy or Bach sleep remedy can be helpful.

Other notes: Vitamin B should be taken in the morning and early afternoon. Deficiency can cause insomnia, but are, generally, too stimulating to take before bed. Exercise should also be done earlier in the day to help relax you and the baby for bed later. Hypnobabies has a sleep CD that can help mother's relax enough to fall asleep.

Additional therapies: Massage, acupuncture, homeopathy.

Itchy Skin

Some causes include: stretching of the belly, breast, and thighs; sweating; eliminating toxins through the skin; an overworked liver; stress; chemical irritations.

Recommended: use a mild soap or none at all- perfumes and additives can irritate the skin; daily exercise to increase the circulation of the skin; eat whole foods and avoid processed foods; drink plenty of water, include high quality Omega oils in your diet, increase foods rich in beta-carotene and get some sunlight every day or take Vitamin D supplement.

Herbal: Internal- an infusion of Echinacea root, burdock root, and dandelion root, 1/2 cup twice daily. External- oatmeal bath, cocoa butter or coconut oil, calendula oil, cream, or gel; slippery

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elm bark powder or marshmallow root powder can be sprinkled in skin creases to maintain dryness.

*Be sure to tell your care provider if itchy skin is not relived by home techniques or is getting worse.

Leg Cramps

Cramps could be due to the increased pressure on the lower extremities from the enlarged uterus. Cramps could also be due to inadequate mineral intake, especially magnesium, calcium, sodium, and potassium.

Recommended: At the time of the cramp, straighten the leg and place the foot firmly against a wall or stand. Daily exercise will increase the circulation to the legs, but exercise also uses up minerals in the diet. Be sure to replace minerals with a good electrolyte drink that include calcium and magnesium. Elevate the legs several times during the day. Yoga, leg exercises such as leg lifts, and swimming are all helpful. Add seaweed into your diet for the high mineral content. Be sure to have some salt in your diet and drink plenty of fluids. Vitamin E and C can help reduce leg cramps. Leg massages are okay unless varicose veins are present and/or if local heat accompanies the cramps.

Morning Sickness/ Nausea and Vomiting

Causes: hormonal changes, low blood sugar, strong smells, changes in the digestive system, oily foods, sweet, sugary foods, vitamin or mineral deficiencies, lack of exercise, fatigue, constipation, emotional stress around being pregnant. It can come on any time of the day.

Generally starts around the 6th week and lasts until 14 weeks gestation.

Watch for: Excessive vomiting and nausea, which can lead to dehydration and malnutrition.

Recommended: eat small frequent meals during the day, make every bite count by eating protein rich foods at every snack. Keep food, such as peanuts, almonds, whole wheat crackers, by your bed at night. Any time you wake, even if you don't feel hungry, eat something. Eat every 1-2 hours during the day and some right before bed. Drink plenty of water, including lemon or cucumbers to the water can help refresh you. Take naps during the day. Have someone else cook for you. Avoid smells that increase nausea- perfumes, coffee, beer, filling your gas tank, road construction, etc. Get exercise and fresh air. Massage can help bring circulation to the body. Talk to friends, other pregnant women, a counselor, a midwife, or use a journal to express any stresses or concerns you have about you pregnancy. Anti-nausea bracelets have been shown to be helpful.

Note: It is likely that morning sickness is linked to a healthy pregnancy and baby. It has also been linked to decreased risk of breast cancer later in life.

Herbal: In small amounts, ginger is safe and recommended. Do not exceed 2 cups of tea a day. Dandelion root, chamomile tea, peppermint, spearmint, catnip, lemon balm, and umeboshi candies.

Additional therapies: Acupuncture, cranio-sacral, homeopathy.

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Nosebleeds

Increased blood volume and with the hormones softening the tissues nose bleeds can be more common during pregnancy.

Recommended: Vitamin C; Calcium; use a humidifier if living in a dry environment

Herbal: Cayenne pepper

Additional therapies: Homeopathy

Pica

Cravings during pregnancy are often a sign from the body that you are in need of some nutrition. For example, craving orange juice and meat could be the way your body is asking for more iron. Pica is the craving for nonnutritive foods such as sand, clay, cornstarch, and ice. This could mean that you need more protein, iron, calcium, or another mineral.

Recommended: Floridix iron supplement- the liquid supplement has been shown to increase iron levels quickly and effectively without increasing constipation; molasses is another super food that can help increase iron levels; seaweed; cooking in a cast-iron pot

Herbal: Yellow dock, dandelion root

Additional therapies: Homeopathy

Round Ligament Pain

Round ligament pain is often felt in the lower abdominal and upper thighs area. The round ligaments attach the uterus with the symphysis pubis. As the uterus grows, and toning contractions start, the ligaments can become cramped as well.

Recommended: Support girdle; Swimming; Bending forward during a cramp; warm compresses

Herbal: St. John's Wort; castor oil compress

Additional therapies: Chiropractor, cranio-sacral, massage

Salivation

Causes: increased acidity in the mouth, by the uptake of starch; generally accompanies nausea.

Recommended: eat small balanced frequent meals during the day; limit starchy foods; cinnamon flavored gum may help.

Shortness of Breath

Often during pregnancy, many women feel as if they are not able to breathe as deeply. This is because the growing fetus and uterus pushes against the diaphragm making the vertical space to the lungs shorter. Your body compensates for this by increasing the width of the rib cage.

Therefore, your intake of oxygen is the same.

Recommended: Stretch with arms above your head often; gentle exercise

Additional therapies: Aromatherapy

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Stretch Marks

Causes: stretch marks are due to the enlarging belly, breasts, and thighs. They are generally based on heredity. Other factors can include nutrition, tissue strength, and the elasticity of your skin

Recommended: Massaging cocoa butter, shea butter, almond oil, or coconut oil into the skin can be a nice treat for yourself. Eat whole foods, avoid processed food-like substances. Make sure you are eating foods rich in Vitamin E, Vitamin C, and Zinc
Take pride in your stretch marks. They are a rite of passage

Vaginal Discharge

Increased circulation to the yoni and birth canal can also increase the amount of discharge present.

Recommended: Change underwear as often as needed or wear a pad; Staying dry can decrease the chance of yeast or bacteria growing; rinse the yoni gently and dry thoroughly after using the bathroom.

Note: If the discharge smells fishy, sour, sweet, yeast-like, or looks gray, yellow, creamy, or curd-like, an organism may have overgrown. See the "Vaginal Infections" section and consult a health professional.

Vaginal Infections

Candida albicans is a common organism in the body that can overgrow when there is an imbalance. Symptoms of a vaginal yeast infection include itchiness, redness in the genitals, white, thick, curd-like discharge, yeast smelling discharge, and burning. A UTI may also accompany a yeast infection. When on antibiotics the yeast can overgrow because of a lack of regulating good bacteria. If on antibiotics, be sure to take a strong probiotic at least two hours away from the antibiotic. Always wipe genitals from front to back

Recommended: wear cotton underwear, loose clothing that allows the vulva to breathe some is advised; reduce simple carbohydrates and sugary foods; Drink a tablespoon of Apple cider vinegar in water two times a day. Extra B vitamins.

Herbal: Chickweed, burdock root, dandelion root, and Echinacea blend; live-culture plain unsweetened yogurt applied externally to the genitals, tea tree oil suppositories

Varicosities

Varicose veins occur when the one way valve becomes weak and allows blood to pool in the veins. Causes can include heredity, lack of exercise, poor diet, pressure of the uterus inhibiting flow. See notes for Constipation and Hemorrhoids.

Note: Never massage varicose veins. If there is heat, swelling, pain, or infection around the vein seek medical treatment immediately.

Recommended: Exercise, walking, biking, swimming, yoga, dancing, leg lunges. Elevate the feet

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higher than the heart several time a day. Don't sit for long periods of time. Foods high in Vitamin C can be helpful. Vitamin B foods, leafy green vegetables. Vitamin E foods.

Additional therapies: Chiropractic care, homeopathy, cranio-sacral

Visual Disturbances

Even the eyes have additional fluid during pregnancy. It is normal for your vision to change slightly. You may need different reading glasses or eye glass prescription.

Recommended: Rest your eyes often. If you are at a computer often, be sure to step outside and look at green plants. Give your eyes enough time to adjust to the sunlight, but don't look directly at the sun. Get regular eye exams to make sure your prescription is up-to-date.

Note: Consult a health care provider if the visual disturbances are greatly affecting your day and are concurrent with high blood pressure, or protein in the urine.

