

COMMON PREGNANCY CONCERNS

PROBLEMS	WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT	WHAT TO AVOID
BACKACHE: Caused by strain of increased uterine weight on back muscles. Aggravated by poor posture.	Good posture. Rest with weight off back. Wear flat-heeled shoes. Sleep on a firm mattress. Do pelvic rocks. Keep feet elevated while sitting. Rise and walk with buttocks/pelvis tucked in. Increase calcium in diet. Moderate exercise (walking, yoga, swimming). Chiropractic care.	Avoid high heels, over-fatigue, and standing in one position for too long at a time. Overexertion and strenuous activity.
BLADDER INFECTION: May be caused by a pre-existing asymptomatic infection, sexual activity or by catheterization.	Drink lots water. Take Cranberry gelcaps/capsules. Increase vitamin C. Pay strict attention to hygiene; wipe front-to-back after urinating or bowel movements. Wear cotton underwear, or none at all, to keep contact with air. Consult your health care provider if symptoms persist to avoid development of a kidney infection.	Avoid underwear or pants which are too tight or make of synthetic "non-breathing" materials. Avoid caffeine. Avoid questionable sexual activity.
BLEEDING GUMS: May be caused by increased circulation. All mucous membranes are more sensitive during pregnancy.	Increase vitamin C. Use soft toothbrush and toothpaste for sensitive gums.	Avoid hard crusty foods, which could cut or abrade gum tissues. Avoid hard or worn-out toothbrush.
BREAST SORENESS: Breasts increase in size during pregnancy to prepare for nursing.	Wear a well-fitting bra. Apply moist heat.	Avoid letting breasts hang freely, especially if they are large.
CONSTIPATION: Progesterone and relaxin, two hormones in abundance during pregnancy, relax smooth muscle of gut, making it less efficient. Intestines are compressed by enlarging uterus.	Increase roughage/fiber by eating raw vegetables, fruits (except bananas), and whole grains. Take a daily walk and exercise. Drink lots of water and chew your food well. Salivary enzymes start digestion while food is still in your mouth. Eat prunes or drink prune juice. Raise feet onto footstool and relax pelvic floor while on the toilet, or better yet, squat on the toilet.	Avoid laxatives, mineral oil, and enemas. Avoid straining for a bowel movement while on toilet.
FATIGUE: may be caused by overwork, possible anemia, not enough protein in diet.	If overworked, slow down and take more naps. If working, cut down hours. If anemic, improve nutrition and increase iron intake. Eat at least 80 - 100 gm of protein daily.	Avoid going for a long time with no rest; avoid stressful situations.
GAS: Can be caused by carbonated beverages, foods. Identify offending foods and avoid them.	Lie down and do abdominal breathing. Do pelvic rock exercises. Having frequent bowel movements helps. Try having at least two or three a day if possible.	Avoid sodas. Avoid foods which cause gas or take digestive enzymes with the food (i.e., Beano.)
HEADACHE (Mild): May be caused by emotional tension, eyestrain, or a need for protein. Fluid retention may affect the amount of vitreous humor (fluid in the eyeball), causing eyestrain. Be sure and report prolonged or severe headache to your HCP.	Use neck roll exercises. Relax, especially facial muscles. Drink soothing herb teas (mint, chamomile.) Alternate hot and cold showers. In ice pack on the head is very effective. Massage neck. Increase protein intake. Chiropractic care.	Avoid aspirin or other medications. Avoid coffee, alcohol, MSG and other preservatives. Caution: If you were a coffee drinker prior to pregnancy and try to give up caffeine completely, this will result in headaches. 1-2 cups/day/OK!
HEARTBURN: The enlarging uterus presses on stomach, forcing stomach fluids back up into esophagus.	Eat several small meals instead of two or three large ones. Eat slowly. Sit up straight. Eat apples, yogurt, papaya, or toast. Elevate rib cage. Elevate the head of your bed. Don't eat before going to bed. Papaya Enzymes help!	Avoid antacids, or at least check with your HCP before using. Avoid gassy, greasy, or spicy foods; sodas, coffee, and alcohol.
HEMORRHOIDS: Pregnancy hormones relax smooth muscle of veins, causing vasocongestion. May be aggravated by straining over bowel movements. Can be caused by impaired circulation or constipation.	Follow all suggestions for CONSTIPATION. Assume knee-to-chest position to relieve pain. Apply cold compresses with witch hazel or a slice of potato. Try hot sitz baths. Use a 'Tucks' pad to gently reinsert veins into rectum. Do pelvic rocks and Kegel exercises Take vitamin B ₆ (25 mg at each meal daily until gone, then 10 mg to prevent return.) Drink nettle tea or take in capsule form. 'Leg Veins' by Nature's Way is a supplement that relieves pressure and pain caused by varicose veins (which hemorrhoids are).	Avoid straining and pushing too hard when having a bowel movement.

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INSOMNIA: It is sometimes harder to get to sleep in the last months of pregnancy due to difficulty in getting comfortable; frequent urination and fetal movement.	Meditate; Massage. Take a warm bath. Drink warm milk or soothing herb tea (chamomile) at bedtime. Exercise daily. Create a relaxing environment. Read a dull book at bedtime. Increase B vitamins.	Avoid all sources of caffeine. Use extra pillows to support back, stomach, and knee. Avoid stressful situations. Avoid all sleeping pills or tranquilizers.
LEG CRAMPS: Caused by nerve compression, inadequate calcium and/or potassium, or poor circulation.	Increase calcium and potassium intake. Assure adequate salt intake. Do pelvic rocks to increase circulation. Elevate legs to prevent cramps. Apply heat or light massage to affected muscles. To relieve cramp, stretch calf by pointing heel (not toe), or stand to place weight on affected leg. The herb, Nettles, is good for leg cramps.	Avoid too much phosphorus in diet; you may need to limit milk intake. Avoid stretching leg muscles too much.
MOODINESS: Due to hormonal changes and increased blood volume.	Remind yourself that this is common and will go away. Keeping your mind on positive thoughts to sustain you works wonders.	Avoid deliberately emotional environments including TV or movies that may upset, anger, or frighten you.
NAUSEA: Common during the first 3 or 4 months of pregnancy. May be caused by hormonal changes. Mornings are usually worse because of low blood sugar and accumulated acids caused by hours without food.	Increase intake of vitamin B ₆ . Eat something like crackers or toast before getting out of bed. Eat four to six small meals daily, with small amounts of food in between meals. Eat a high, complex carbohydrate snack at bedtime. Keep protein intake high. Separate food and fluids by at least 30 minutes. Ginger snaps, ginger tea, mint tea, and/or peach tree leaf tea can help. Peppermint (tea, unsweetened candy, essential oil) works well. Use 'Sea Bands'.	Avoid smoking and 2 nd hand smoke. Avoid greasy, spicy food. Avoid having an empty stomach, or an over-full stomach.
PAIN IN GROIN: A sharp pain in the groin is usually caused by cramping of a round ligament as it stretches.	Lean forward or do pelvic rocks until it goes away.	Do not roll, twist, or sit up suddenly.
SHORTNESS OF BREATH: Caused by pressure of enlarging uterus on diaphragm and lungs. Also, you are breathing for the baby as well as yourself. May also be a symptom of anemia.	Maintain good posture. Sit up straight. Sleep with upper body propped up, or elevate the head of your bed. Exercise daily. Eat a diet high in iron-rich foods. As with most complaints, it is easier to prevent than to remedy.	Avoid anemia, smoking, and over-exertion.
SWOLLEN FEET AND ANKLES: A small amount is normal. Caused by weight of uterus and decreased efficiency of veins, which return blood from the legs. May also be caused by inadequate protein intake. May also be caused by over-hydration.	Elevate feet frequently. Exercise to improve circulation. Wear loose fitting clothing and shoes. Increase fluids, especially water and cranberry juice, and maintain a daily protein intake of at least 80 - 100 grams. Maintain adequate salt in diet. Epsom salt soaks.	Avoid diuretics/water pills. Avoid prolonged standing or hot weather.
VARICOSE VEINS: Pregnancy hormones decrease efficiency of venous return from legs; aggravated by enlarging uterus.	Elevate legs frequently. Use support stockings. Walk daily. Stay out of chairs: instead, tailor-sit on the floor. Avoid pointing toes. Do pelvic rocks and ankle circles. The herb, Nettles, is good for varicose veins. Take vitamin B ₆ . 'Leg Veins' by Nature's Way is a supplement that relieves pressure and pain caused by varicose veins	Avoid prolonged standing or prolonged sitting with legs crossed. Avoid constrictive clothing.
WATER RETENTION:	See: Swollen Feet and Ankles	
YEAST INFECTION: May be more common in pregnancy because of altered balance of natural organisms.	Eliminate sugar from diet. Increase water intake. Eat non-sweetened yogurt or cottage cheese. Use plain yogurt or acidophilus capsules in vagina to help restore natural organisms. Take cranberry capsules to help restore acid environment of vagina. Garlic cloves as vaginal suppositories. Maintain personal hygiene.	Wear cotton underwear or none at all. Avoid antibiotics as they alter the balance of bacteria in the vagina, allowing yeast overgrowth.