



COMMON DISCOMFORTS OF PREGNANCY

COMMON DISCOMFORT	WHY IT OCCURS	WHAT TO DO
Backache	Strain of growing uterus on back muscles and ligaments; aggravated by poor posture; relaxed pelvic joints; weight gain; kidney infection	<u>Upper back:</u> Exercises: head rolling, shoulder shrugs and arm circles; prenatal yoga. Supportive bra. <u>Lower back:</u> Exercises: pelvic rock, knee-chest twist; swimming; prenatal yoga. Rise from lying down by rolling to side and pushing up with your hands. When lifting, bend from the knees, not with your back. Wear low-heeled shoes; maternity girdle if poor stomach muscle tone. BOTH: firm mattress, warm bath, back rub/massage, good posture, heating pad/hot water bottle. May take 2 – 3 regular or 2 extra strength Tylenol. Call CNM if pain on urination, fever or chills.
Braxton-Hicks Contractions (false labor)	Irregular, painless contractions of uterus. Can occur anytime after 1 st trimester. Near term help soften cervix. May increase with dehydration, sleeplessness or hunger.	Increase fluids, eat, warm bath, relaxation and breathing exercises, may take 2 - 3 regular or 2 extra strength Tylenol, rest. Call CNM if you are less than 35 weeks and have more than 4-6 painful contractions in an hour.
Constipation	Food moves slower when pregnant. Iron pills may cause constipation. Decreased activity.	Drink 8-10 glasses of liquid/day. Eat more fiber (bran, prunes, figs, fruit, vegetables, cereals, whole grains). Increase exercise. Drink warm herbal tea or water on rising to stimulate bowel movement (BM). Raise feet on stool when having BM to increase relaxation/comfort. Do not take laxative without talking to CNM. Metamucil with 8oz. water or juice may be helpful. Colace 100 mg 1 to 2 times/day will help soften bowels.
Dizziness	Low blood sugar; low blood pressure; anemia; lying on back in later half of pregnancy; rapid position changes.	Eat piece of fruit/juice with some protein (milk, cheese peanut butter, nuts). Change positions slowly. Drink more liquids so urine clear to light yellow. Correct anemia.
Fatigue	Hormones; anemia	Normal in early and late pregnancy. Balance rest with exercise. Nap if possible. Correct anemia.
Gums Bleed	Increased blood supply; hormones	Use soft toothbrush, floss, increase Vitamin C in diet (fruits, tomatoes, and broccoli), and get teeth cleaned to remove plaque.
Headaches	Eye strain; nasal congestion; sinus problems; constipation; hormonal changes; fatigue; tension/stress; high blood pressure	Relaxation, rest, head and neck massage, neck rolling exercise, peppermint or chamomile tea, take 2 – 3 regular or 2 extra strength Tylenol; if nasal congestion or sinus pain Sudafed 30 mg (1 tab) every 6 hours and hot moist towel over eyes and forehead, humidifier. Avoid aspirin, Ibuprofen and MSG (found especially in Chinese food). Call CNM if headache severe, blurred vision or stomach pain.
Heartburn	Uterus pushes up on stomach; muscle which closes stomach is loose	Eat small, frequent meals; eat slowly; drink fluids between meals instead of with meals; avoid spicy/greasy food (take-out food is usually greasy); chew gum for 30 minutes after eating; avoid overeating; do not lie down after eating; avoid coffee and cigarettes; papaya enzymes/juice may be helpful. Try Tums or liquid Maalox/Mylanta 1-2 Tablespoons 1 hour after eating and at bedtime. Avoid baking soda and Alka-Seltzer. Zantac– 75 – 150 mgm 2/day.

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Hemorrhoids	Pressure of uterus; constipation	Avoid constipation (see above); try witch hazel or Epsom salt compresses, warm baths, Kegel exercises, ice bag, Anusol or Preparation H cream or suppositories 3 times/day.
Leg Cramps	Low calcium/high phosphorus diet; growing uterus decreases blood flow to legs; pressure of baby can cause shooting pains in leg	Straighten leg with toes pointed toward head; heat, massage, exercise; less soda drinks and processed meats (high in phosphorus); more dairy products or calcium supplement; wear comfortable low-heeled shoes; change position or get in knee chest position for a few minutes if shooting pain; tell CNM if leg hot and painful to touch.
Nausea/vomiting	Hormones; slow movement of food	Crackers or dry toast before getting out of bed; eat protein during day and before going to bed as it takes longer to digest and will keep stomach full; drink fluids between meals instead of with meals; try mint, ginger or chamomile tea; avoid greasy/spicy food and strong smells; get out into the fresh air and exercise; sip ginger-ale, cola or 7-up; acupressure wrist bands; (seabands)increase Vitamin B6 (whole grains and cheese) 50 mg 1-2/day. Avoid cigarettes.
Nose bleed/stuffy nose	Increased blood supply; hormones; allergies	Use humidifier/vaporizer, salt water nose drops, blow nose gently, keep upright and squeeze nose if bleeding—apply ice; thin coat of Vaseline especially at bedtime; increase Vitamin C (fruits, broccoli, and tomatoes). Tell CNM if you have seasonal allergies.
Round ligament pain—pain in groin, lower stomach or sides of uterus	Ligaments attached to uterus are stretched; pressure of baby on nerves; active baby; sudden movements	Heat, warm baths, rest; avoid twisting, heavy lifting or sudden movements; take 2 - 3 regular or 2 extra strength Tylenol; place pillow between legs and under stomach when resting; use maternity girdle if weak stomach muscles; bend towards side of pain; pelvic rock exercise
Salivation--increased	Hormones	Chew gum, eat frequent small meals
Shortness of breath	Pressure of growing uterus on lungs; weight gain; anemia	Stand/sit up straight; lift arms up by ears or over head; sleep on 2-3 pillows; practice slow, deep breathing; correct anemia
Skin changes –patches of color on face, breast, stomach	Hormones	Avoid sun, use sunscreen, wear wide brimmed hat. Usually gets lighter or fades after pregnancy.
Sleeplessness	Active baby; frequent trips to bathroom; unable to find comfortable position; stress/tension	Relaxation exercises, warm bath, warm milk, chamomile or peppermint tea, massage, increase B vitamins (whole grains), use extra pillows for comfort; nap during day; avoid caffeine (coffee, cola, tea, chocolate) and tobacco. Do not take sleeping pills.
Stretch marks (breast, stomach, hips and thighs)	Scar tissue that forms when skin stretches	Sufficient protein in diet; lotions and oils don't prevent but may minimize stretch marks; will turn silvery after pregnancy
Swollen feet or legs	Growing uterus decreases blood flow to legs; standing too long; high blood pressure	Keep off legs when possible, elevate legs, do not cross legs when sitting, avoid tight knee socks, wear support hose, rest on side, walk, swim, sit in pool; put on maternity support pantyhose before getting out of bed; avoid standing for long periods of time. Call CNM if severe headache, blurred vision or stomach pain.
Urinary frequency; losing urine when sneeze or cough	Growing uterus puts pressure on bladder; possible infection	Drink more during day and less at night, Kegel exercises, wear mini pad. Tell CNM if it hurts to pee.
Vaginal discharge--increased	Hormones; increased blood flow	Cotton underwear, avoid tight fitting slacks/shorts; wear mini pad; do not douche. Tell CNM if burns, itches or smells.
Varicose veins	Hormones; pressure of growing uterus on leg veins; standing too much; weight gain	Sit instead of standing, rest on your side with legs up, avoid tight knee socks, put on maternity support pantyhose before getting out of bed; walk or swim, don't cross your legs, avoid standing for long periods of time.