

Common Physical Discomforts of Pregnancy

DISCOMFORT	CAUSES	INTERVENTIONS	OTHER TREATMENTS
Ankle Swelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imbalance in venous return due to effects of progesterone and pregnancy uterus • Warm weather • Associated with varicose veins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid standing for long periods • Elevate feet (point feet down and up with full foot circles) • Avoid tight socks • Elevate legs • Support stockings • Swimming/ Cool water soaks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dandelion tea 1 cup a day- steep with lid x 3-5 min • Parsley caps • Stinging nettle tea • Kyolic garlic capsules
Backache	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase curvature of the spine (lumbosacral) due to the weight of the enlarged uterus • Softening and relocation of pelvic joints (due to increased circulation hormones such as relaxin and progesterone) • Strain on muscles and ligaments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pelvic tils exercises (lying with knees bent, press back into floor-may also be done on hands and knees by pressing back towards ceiling) • Warm bath (Jacuzzi) • Exercise (walking, swimming) • Avoid high heels • Lightweight maternity girdle • Muscle spasm responds well to analgesia, heat and rest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chiropractic adjustments • Massage therapy • Tylenol plain on occasion • Heat/cold to affected areas (20 min on, 20 min off) alternate heat and cold
Bleeding Gums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estrogen causes gums to become hyperemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a soft toothbrush • Regular dental care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calcium and Vitamin C
Breast Tenderness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased circulating estrogen, progesterone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a well-fitting bra for support 	
Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced motility due to smooth muscle relaxation (due to progesterone) • Displaced intestine due to enlarging uterus • Increased water reabsorption from colon • Iron supplements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small frequent meals to prevent hypoglycemia • Increase fluids (especially water) • Relaxation • Warm and/or cold compresses • Mild pain reliever • Alert your midwife if severe headache is accompanied by dizziness, blurred vision spots before eyes after 24 hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain or extra strength Tylenol- 1 to 2 tablets every 4-6 hours on occasion

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epigastric pain (upper abdominal pain) 	
Heartburn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upward displacement and compression of the stomach by the uterus • Decrease in GI motility and relaxing of cardiac sphincter due to progesterone and relaxin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat small frequent meals • Avoid eating before going to bed • Chew food thoroughly • Avoid bending over and lying flat • Avoid spicy and greasy meals • Sleep elevated on pillows • Drink fluid separate from meals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat Papaya or take papaya tablets orally • Ginger (capsules or tea) • Slippery elm capsules or lozenges • Fennel tea • 2 tsp water, 1 tsp apple cider vinegar or apple cider vinegar caps
Hemorrhoids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced motility due to smooth muscle relaxation (due to progesterone) • Displaced intestines due to enlarging uterus • Increased water reabsorption from colon • Iron supplements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase fluid intake • Increase roughage (fruits and vegetables, grains) • Daily exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vitamin E 400-800 u/day • Evening Primrose Oil 1000-2000 mg/day • Fresh grated potato applied to hemorrhoid
Leg Cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imbalance of the calcium phosphorus ratio • Fatigue • Poor circulation • TOTAL salt restriction can cause leg cramps • Too much milk or not enough (4 cups a day is good) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate relief-stretch the muscle by flexing foot upward • Massage, warm pack • Increase calcium intake • Avoid hyper extension of foot (i.e. point toes) • Salt in moderation (cook with but don't add to food) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vitamin E 400-800 u/day • Calcium supplement should have a ratio of magnesium 2:1 (ie. 300mg Ca+ with 150 Magnesium)
Ligament Pain- pain felt on one or both sides of your lower abdomen, often worse after activity- usually noted most in early and then late pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretching of ligaments of growing uterus • Strain due to activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay down on your side • Place a pillow under the side of your abdomen to relieve strain on ligaments with a pillow between your knees • Warm compresses/ warm bath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Severe pain take 1-2 tablets regular strength Tylenol every 4-6 hours as needed • Moist heat to affected side (right side most common)
Nasal Stuffiness and/or Bleeding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased estrogen causes vascular swelling and enlargement of the nasal turbinate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humidifier • Petroleum jelly (Vaseline) may help to protect nasal mucosa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vitamin E 400-800 u/day
Nausea and Vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased levels of human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat crackers or dry toast before slowly arising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sea bands on both wrists (works on acupuncture points)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in carbohydrate metabolism • Some prenatal vitamins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small frequent meals rather than large ones • Avoid coffee and foods with strong odours • Eat solids separately from liquids • Do not go for long periods of time without eating • *usually subsides after the 4th missed period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red Raspberry leaf (tear or capsules) • Ginger (Capsules or tea) • Peppermint tea • Smell fresh lemon • Floravit • Brewers yeast • B6 complex • If vomiting is severe and not alleviated by the above measures, Diclectin (an antiemetic) may be considered, requires a prescription from your midwife.
PICA (cravings for strange, bizarre food or materials as laundry starch, clay, dirt, flour, baking soda, ice, refrigerator frost)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually due to an iron deficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase iron intake in food • Iron supplements • Floravit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floravit 20ml twice a day for 1 week then 20 ml once a day
Urinary Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure of the enlarging uterus on bladder, subsides at about 12 weeks gestation when uterus moves out of the pelvic, reoccurs in the last month of pregnancy when enlarged uterus presses on bladder again 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can do Kegal exercises for incontinence (150 a day) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If history of Urinary Tract Infections, Cranberry capsules 1000mg 1-2 capsules 2-3 times a day. • If symptoms of UTI take 1 capsule every 4 hours until symptoms subside for maximum 2 days then 1-2 caps 2-3 times a day
Vaginal Discharge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased formation of mucous by the cervical glands under the influence of estrogen • Result of a reduction in acidity, this organisms grow more easily (ie. Yeast infections) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear cotton underwear • Daily bathing/showering • Avoid wearing pantyhose • Half strength vinegar and water to wash rather than soap (1part vinegar to 2 parts water) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of Yeast Infections • Acidophulus daily • Vitamin C 1000-2000 mg with bioflavonoids daily.
Varicose Veins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually hereditary and same as causes of hemorrhoids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate legs and exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vitamin E 400-800 u/day

FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN PREGNANCY

FACTOR	EFFECTS
Smoking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women who smoke bear smaller infants than non-smokers • Significant increase in perinatal deaths (4600 infant deaths/year in US as per Surgeon General's report) • Preeclampsia higher in women who smoke • Slight retardation for reading, math and general ability at age 7-11 • Explanation: carbon monoxide and its functional inactivation of fetal and maternal hemoglobin • Vasoconstrictor action of nicotine, causing reduction of perfusion of the placenta • Decreased appetite thus decreased intake • Decreased plasma volume • ****Thus DO NOT smoke during pregnancy
Smoking Cannabis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is safest not to use cannabis during pregnancy and breastfeeding • There is no safe time to consume cannabis, since the baby's brain develops throughout pregnancy. In fact, brain development continues from infancy, through the teenage years until about age 25; cannabis can affect the brain at all stages of development. • No matter how it used (e.g., smoked, vaped, eaten), the developing baby may be affected by all forms of cannabis taken by pregnant and breastfeeding women. • Smoking cannabis may increase carbon monoxide levels in blood, which like smoking cigarettes, can decrease the amount of oxygen the developing baby receives. • Studies have indicated that the use of cannabis during pregnancy may be associated with increased risk for low birth weight, preterm labour, and stillbirth. • Cannabis compounds are stored in body fat and can be passed to the baby through breastmilk. These chemicals are slowly released over time (up to 30 days), which means that "pumping and dumping" breastmilk does not work the same way it does with alcohol. Some research reports that babies exposed to cannabis through breastmilk have slower motor development, reduces muscular tone and poor sucking. • Maternal cannabis use has been linked to adverse effects on children's brain development, memory function, ability to pay attention, reasoning and problem-solving skills, and is associated with more hyperactive behaviour, an increased risk of depression and anxiety and increased risk for future substance use. Therefore, the effects of cannabis exposure during pregnancy may last a lifetime. • Using cannabis during pregnancy may affect your DNA and genes, which can be passed on to future generations, impacting their health.
Alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic alcoholism produces abnormalities and fetal alcohol syndrome • Differences of opinion exist regarding social drinking • Evidence that even linear relationship between alcohol consumption and fetal damage exists • **** Thus DO NOT drink during pregnancy
Caffeine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no evidence that caffeine has a teratogenic effect • Massive doses IV show a decrease in blood flow by 5-10% • Human studies show no association with birth defects or low birth weight • Caffeine interferes with iron absorption