

## Common Symptoms During Pregnancy

Growing a baby is hard work. Your body will go through a lot of changes as your baby grows and your hormones change. Along with the aches and pains of pregnancy, you will feel other new or changing symptoms. Here are some common symptoms of pregnancy. Please ask your health care provider about any concerns you may have about how you feel and changes in your body during this special time.

**Fatigue:** Being tired is common during pregnancy. Most women feel tired the first few months, then again towards the end. Exercise, rest, and proper diet can make you feel less tired. It may also help to take an hour-long nap every day.

**Problems with Urination:** Early on in the pregnancy, you will likely be making more trips to the bathroom. As your uterus grows and rises higher in your abdomen (belly), the feeling may improve. Even so, you will continue to urinate more throughout pregnancy. That means that you also need to drink more water during pregnancy, and you may find that you are thirstier than when you are not pregnant.

As you get closer to delivery and your baby drops lower into your pelvis, you will need to pee much more, and the amount of urine passed at one time will be less (the bladder holds less due to pressure from the baby).

If you have pain when you urinate or a change in urine odor or color, call your health care provider. These could be signs of a bladder infection.

Some pregnant women also leak urine when they cough or sneeze. For most women, this goes away after the baby is born. If this happens to you, start doing Kegel exercises to strengthen the muscles of your pelvic floor.

**Vaginal Discharge:** You may see more vaginal discharge while pregnant. Call your doctor if the discharge:

- Has a foul odor
- Has a greenish color
- Makes you feel itchy
- Makes you have pain or soreness

**Constipation:** Having a hard time moving the bowels is normal during pregnancy. Prenatal vitamins with the extra iron can cause constipation. Meanwhile, hormonal changes during pregnancy slow down your digestive system. Later in your pregnancy, the pressure from your uterus on your rectum may also worsen the problem. You can ease constipation by:

- Eating raw fruits and vegetables, such as prunes, to get extra fiber
- Eat whole grain or bran cereals for more fiber
- Drink plenty of water (8 - 9 cups daily)
- Ask your doctor about a stool softener
  - Miralax and Colace are safe and effective in pregnancy

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**Heartburn:** While you are pregnant, food stays in the stomach and bowels longer. This may cause heartburn (stomach acid moving back up into the esophagus). You can reduce heartburn by:

- Eating small meals
- Avoiding spicy and greasy foods
- Not drinking large amounts of liquid before bedtime
- Not exercising for at least 2 hours after you eat
- Not lying down flat right after a meal

If you continue to have heartburn, talk to your health care provider about medicines that can help.

**Nosebleeds and Bleeding Gums:** Some women have nose and gum bleeding while they are pregnant. This is because the tissues in their nose and gums get dry, and the blood vessels dilate and are closer to the surface. You can avoid or reduce this bleeding by:

- Drinking lots of fluids
- Getting lots of vitamin C, citrus and berries
- Using a humidifier (a device that puts water in the air) to decrease dryness of the nose or sinuses
- Brushing your teeth with a soft toothbrush to decrease bleeding gums
- Maintaining good dental hygiene and using floss every day to keep your gums healthy

**Swelling, Varicose Veins, and Hemorrhoids:** Swelling in your legs is common. You may see more swelling as you get closer to giving birth. The swelling is caused by your uterus pressing on the veins.

- You may also notice the veins in your lower body become larger
- In the legs, these are called varicose veins
- You may also have veins close to your vulva and vagina that swell
- In your rectum, veins that swell are called hemorrhoids

**To reduce swelling:**

- Raise your legs and rest your feet on a surface higher than your belly
- Lay on your side in bed
- Wear support pantyhose or Free R stockings
- Limit salty foods. Salt works like a sponge and makes your body hold more water
- Try not to strain during bowel movements. This can worsen hemorrhoids

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**Breathing Problems:** Some women feel short of breath at times while they are pregnant. It happens more often in the early part of the pregnancy, and again toward the end. At first, pregnancy hormones can make you breathe more deeply. This might make you feel like you're working harder to get air. You may get short of breath again in the later weeks of pregnancy. This is because the uterus takes up so much room that the lungs do not have as much room to expand as before. It's also easy to hyperventilate (breathe too fast) when you're pregnant. If you notice your lips and fingers feel tingly, try to slow down your breathing and relax. A week or two before delivery, the baby drops lower as it is getting ready to move through the birth canal. At that point, the shortness of breath may go away. Other things that may help include:

- Sitting up straight
- Sleeping propped up on a pillow
- Resting when you feel short of breath
- Moving at a slower pace

If you suddenly have a hard time breathing that is unusual for you, you should see your doctor right away or go to the emergency room.