

Body Changes During Pregnancy

While you're pregnant, many changes happen in your body. These changes are caused by hormones that get your body ready for labor, birth and breastfeeding and by your growing baby which puts pressure on your organs, pelvis, lower back. Most discomforts of pregnancy are not dangerous and there are things to try to help you feel more comfortable. **If you are really worried or in severe pain, you should always call the midwife.**

	Causes of discomforts	How to help
Abdomen/ Pelvis	<p>Pain: Ligaments and muscles that support your uterus are stretched and may spasm as your baby grows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joints in the pelvis are less stable due to hormones relaxing them ▪ During the second half of your pregnancy, you may notice round ligament pain that is sharp or dull pain on both or one side of your belly. ▪ Pain might come with walking or turning over in bed <p>Cramps: are muscle contractions of the uterus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take warm bath, try gentle movements like stretching, change your position ▪ Wear a belly band, pregnancy cradle or pregnancy belt ▪ Use caution when rolling over in bed, you might need an extra pillow for support ▪ Drink lots of water ▪ Exercise regularly – walking and swimming
Back	<p>Pain: Your abdominal and back muscles can be weakened from the enlarged uterus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased weight can strain the low back ▪ Your enlarged uterus can push on the sciatic nerve causing numbness or weakness in the legs <p>Balance: Change in your balance due to your belly tipping you forward</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use good posture ▪ Bend from the waist to pick things up, bend your knees into a squat and let your legs do the work ▪ Avoid heavy lifting ▪ Take breaks during the day and rest when you can ▪ Use a heating pad or warm compress ▪ Wear a pregnancy cradle or belly band to help support the weight of your belly ▪ Wear shoes with low heels and good support ▪ Try acupuncture, chiropractic care or physical therapy – contact us if you need a referral
Breathing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ As the uterus grows, it puts pressure on your lower lungs causing shortness of breath 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take good deep breaths regularly ▪ Use good posture ▪ Rest as needed

<p>Breasts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Breasts may become larger, firmer and more tender ▪ Areola (area around the nipple) becomes larger and darker ▪ Nipples might stick out more ▪ In the second half of pregnancy, you may notice small amounts of fluid called colostrum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wear a supportive bra ▪ Use nipple pads for leaking colostrum ▪ Call if you have pain, heat, redness or a hard lump, it could be a sign of infection
<p>Digestion</p>	<p>Heartburn: acid from your stomach is pushed up into your throat from your uterus putting more pressure on the stomach and from the hormones relaxing the muscle that covers the opening of the stomach</p> <p>Constipation: intestines slow due to hormones in pregnancy</p> <p>Hemorrhoids: caused from constipation and relaxation of blood vessels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keep a food diary – some foods worsen heartburn for different people – common causes are spicy foods, acidic foods, greasy foods ▪ Eat small, frequent meals – eat slowly ▪ Drink between meals, avoid eating and drinking together – it can overfill your stomach ▪ Do not lay down or recline within 2 hours of eating ▪ Wear loose fitting clothing ▪ Sleep with your head raised on pillows <p>OTC medications/herbs: start with Tums or Maalox. If you are taking either of these multiple times per day, consider adding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pepcid or Zantac – Start with once per day then increase to twice per day ▪ Papaya Enzymes – as directed on package ▪ Do not take Alka-Seltzer, Pepto-Bismo or baking soda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eat raw fruits, dried fruits (like prunes), vegetables, whole grains and bran ▪ Drink 8-10 glasses of water per day ▪ Walk every day <p>OTC medications/herbs: add fiber bulking agent like Metamucil or Citrucel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For gas pain, simethicone (Gas X, Mylicon) ▪ For hard stools: use stool softener like Colace <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sitz baths in warm water– 2-3 times per day for 15-20 minutes ▪ OTC medications/herbs: Use witch hazel pads (tucks) and use Preparation H or Anusol

<p>Energy and Emotions</p>	<p>Tiredness or fatigue: hormonal changes, changes in blood flow, low blood pressure, dehydration, anemia</p> <p>Dizziness: caused by change in blood volume which occurs by mid-pregnancy or by hormonal changes affecting blood pressure or blood sugar</p> <p>Mood changes: hormonal changes, tiredness from changes in sleep</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take naps if you can – for some people napping can disrupt your sleep at night ▪ Lay on your left side when resting or sleeping ▪ Drink lots of water ▪ Stand up and sit down slowing, move with intention ▪ Avoid getting too hot or standing for long periods of time ▪ Eat small, frequent meals or snacks with protein ▪ Call if you are frequently dizzy or if you are fainting or falling ▪ Talk with someone supportive or reach out for additional support – our office can help ▪ Relaxation techniques ▪ Good bedtime routine – turning off screens, having tea or bath at night
<p>Legs</p>	<p>Cramps: caused by low calcium or magnesium in your diet, poor circulation</p> <p>Swelling or edema: caused by relaxation of your veins and increased amount of blood which make it harder for your body to pump the blood back up to your heart</p> <p>Varicose veins: relaxation of the veins and increased pressure, also related to genetics, more likely if it runs in your family</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eat foods rich in calcium and magnesium ▪ Do stretching and massage at night before bed ▪ Drink lots of water ▪ Exercise daily to help with blood flow ▪ Lie on your left side ▪ Sit with your feet up ▪ Wear compression stocks or stockings ▪ Epsom salt bath or foot soaks ▪ Wear support stocking ▪ Raise your feet during the day ▪ Avoid socks and hose with elastic bands ▪ Don't cross your legs ▪ OTC medications/herbs: vit E 400 IU twice a day, drink nettles tea daily ▪ Call if you have redness, swelling, pain and heat in one part of your leg that could be a blood clot.

Urinary Tract	Frequent urination: pressure on the bladder from the uterus causes you to pee more often	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoid caffeine ▪ Go to the bathroom more often ▪ Use good hygiene ▪ Some people avoid drinking fluids close to bedtime – make sure to drink more during the day ▪ Call if you have frequent urination with burning, urgency or fever
Vagina	<p>Increased vaginal discharge: hormonal changes cause more vaginal discharge and cervical mucous</p> <p>Vaginal pressure: from the weight of uterus and hormonal changes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Don't douche or wear pantyliners daily ▪ Wear loose fitting clothes and avoid tight fitting underwear ▪ Call if you have a change in the discharge – yellow, brown, green or cottage cheese like in appearance or vaginal itching, burning, foul-smelling discharge