



## OB-GYN Women's Physicians Assoc., Inc.

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### COMMON DISCOMFORTS OF PREGNANCY

(In alphabetical order.)

#### Abdominal cramping

**\*The ligaments that support the growing uterus are stretching**

\*Note location and duration. Try a heating pad for 5 minutes and /or Tylenol every 4-6 hours.  
Call us if severe pain and /or bleeding occurs.

#### Allergies

**\*The hormonal changes can increase nasal sensitivity.**

\*Try to avoid the allergen. Claritin & Zyrtec are safe.  
Try Ocean Spray saline nasal drops/spray.

#### Backache

**\*The increasing uterus size causes a shift in the center of gravity and posture.**

\*Try heat/ice for 15 minutes alternately. Avoid lifting, bending, heeled shoes. Wear a supportive bra, try stretching, pelvic rocking, wearing an external abdominal binder, and /or Tylenol.

#### Bleeding gums

**\*The high level of estrogen increases gum sensitivity.**

\*Practice good oral hygiene. Use a soft toothbrush & floss regularly. Try warm saline mouthwashes.  
Increase Vitamin C.

#### Braxton-Hicks Contractions

**\*These probably occur to increase the tone of the uterine muscles.**

\*Rest on your left side and /or walk. Push oral fluids. Empty your bladder frequently. Call us if they are regular and /or intense, are coming > 4 in an hour and you are <35 weeks along.

#### Breast pain

**\*The increased hormone levels cause a thickening of the fat layer and stimulate the developing milk ducts.**

\*Perform a breast exam, avoid caffeine, and try Vitamin E 800 IU. Wear a supportive bra constantly. Applying ice packs may also help.

#### Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

**\*The fluid retention causes compression of certain nerves.**

\*Wear a wrist splint while sleeping. This usually disappears postpartum. Hand therapy referrals can be given.

#### Chloasma/Skin Changes Linea Nigra

**\*Estrogen and progesterone hormones have melanocyte-stimulating effects.**

\*Avoid sun exposure, wear sunscreen.  
Try 2-5% Hydroxyquinone cream.

#### Constipation

**\*Progesterone relaxes the smooth muscle, decreasing peristalsis. This is also a side effect of iron.**

\*Try drinking >8 glasses of water daily & warm liquids in the morning. Eat prunes, a high fiber diet, e.g. raw vegetables, fruits, whole-wheat grains, etc. Try exercise, Colace 50-200mg. or Metamucil 4-7g. Do not drink caffeine.

#### Diarrhea

**\*Also caused by hormonal changes affecting peristalsis.**

\*Drink liquids high in sugar to avoid dehydration. Avoid dairy products. e.g. Milk or milk products like yogurt, cheese. Try rest, rice, bananas, toast or Kaopectate sparingly. Kaopectate 2tbs. now, take again with each loose motion.

#### Difficulty breathing

**\*The enlarging uterus presses up against your diaphragm.**

\*Avoid restrictive clothing. Use pillows to elevate your back. Decrease exercise. Rest.

#### Dizziness

**\*The enlarged uterus compresses the vena cava & causes nausea/vomiting.**

\*Avoid rapid breathing. Slowly change positions. Lay on your left side. Eat regularly and frequently small meals through-

out the day. Try calf raises. Avoid overheating.

#### Fatigue

**\*Caused by a fall in the metabolic rate, hormone level changes and sleep disturbances.**

\*Take frequent rest periods. Avoid exercise before bed and caffeine. Exercise in the am. Try warm milk and relaxation.

#### Flatulence

**\*Occurs from decreased gastric movement & intestinal pressure.**

\*Avoid gas-forming foods e.g., broccoli, potatoes, cabbage, milk with lactose and straws. Try taking Mylicon 40-80mg, exercise, use lactose free milk.

#### Headaches

**\*Caused by stress, increased blood volume, low blood sugar or hormone level changes.**

\*Rest in a dark room, drink fluids, try relaxation techniques, massage, and /or hot/cold compresses. Try Tylenol 325-650mg every 4-6 hours.

#### Heartburn

**\*Hormonal influence relaxes the cardiac sphincter and decreases gastric motility.**

\*Eat small frequent meals and limit beverages with meals. Avoid spicy or cold foods & lying down after eating. Try liquid Maalox Plus or Extra Strong Mylanta. Elevate the head of the bed when sleeping.

#### Hemorrhoids

**\*Straining during bowel movements causes veins in rectum to become inflamed & swollen.**

\*Eat a high fiber diet, bran, whole grains & fruit. Try frequent sitz baths, sitting on a rubber ring. and /or Preparation H or Anusol HC cream.

#### Insomnia

**\*Caused by anxiety &/or being uncomfortable.**

\*Try a warm bath, relaxation techniques, and a body pillow. Avoid caffeine.

Itching

**\*Changes in the hormone levels.**

\*Try an Aveeno bath, use moisturizing lotion or baby oil frequently.

Leg cramps

**\*The uterus puts pressure on pelvic blood vessels. Also caused by decreased circulation.**

\*Straighten the affected leg and stretch calf 3-4 times daily (Book Stretching by Anderson). Try leg elevation several times daily, a diet high in calcium and low in phosphate, exercise & Try Mag 122-244mg, Ca 1.5-2g daily. Use a heating pad or hot water bottle.

Libido changes

**\*Caused by physical discomforts, anxiety & hormone changes.**

\*Try different positions, more foreplay, going on dates or spending time alone together.

Mood swings

**\*Occur from constant fluctuation of hormone levels.**

\*Make time for yourself, rest, exercise, communicate needs, do enjoyable activities.

Nasal congestion

**\*The hormone changes increase nasal mucosa sensitivity.**

\*Use a humidifier, drink fluids, try ocean spray saline nasal drops or spray, and gargle with salt water.

Nose bleeds

**\*The high estrogen levels increase nasal sensitivity. Also caused by dry air.**

\*Loosen the clothing around your neck. Sit with head tilted forward & pinch your nostrils for 10-15 minutes. Avoid overheated air, excessive exertion & medicated nasal sprays. Blow your nose gently. Use a humidifier in your room.

Pain with intercourse

**\*Occurs from pelvic and vaginal congestion, uterus enlargement, or anxiety.**

\*Try changing positions, adding lubrication, e.g. K-Y liquid or gel, longer foreplay & more communication.

Round ligament pain

**\*The ligaments that support the enlarging uterus are stretching.**

\*Flex your knees to your abdomen. (Book, Stretching by Anderson) warm baths, a heating pad for 10 minutes, exercise, and a body pillow.

Stretch marks

**\*The skin stretches to accommodate the enlarging uterus.**

\*Apply lotion with Vitamin E and Aloe Vera daily. They are permanent but usually will fade.

Swollen hand/feet

**\*The water retention impairs the circulation & increases pressure in the extremities while standing.**

\*Wear loose clothes. Elevate legs throughout the day. Wear support hose. Walk for 10 minutes every 1-2 hours. Drink > 8 glasses of water daily. Avoid long standing.

Tender breasts

**\*Usually fluid retention as well as increased supply in blood and milk.**

\*Wear a support bra. It may help to wear a bra 24 hours a day.

Urinary frequency

**\*The heavy weight of the uterus pushes on the bladder.**

\*Urinate frequently, do not wait for urgent call. Drink less fluid before bed. Wear easily removable clothing.

#### Urinary Tract Infection

**\*These are common because of increased exposure to bacteria**

\*To prevent, drink more water and cranberry juice. Urinate frequently. Wipe front to back. Urinate immediately after intercourse. Call our office if you suspect an infection.

#### Vaginal discharge

**\*Estrogen causes increased cervical mucous formation.**

\*Wear cotton underwear & pantliners. Call if odor or itching, change in color. Avoid pantyhose, girdles, and tight pants.

#### Varicosities

**\*May be hereditary, caused by impaired circulation, pressure of the uterus and hormonal effects on veins.**

\*Avoid restrictive clothing, long periods of standing, & crossing legs. Wear support hose. Elevate legs. Walk. Take rest periods.

#### Yeast infection

**\*Caused by a change in vaginal flora because of hormone fluctuations.**

\*To prevent, use good hygiene. Wear cotton underwear. Use a hairdryer to dry yourself. Eating plain yogurt or acidophilus milk may help. Call our office if you suspect an infection.

