



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

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### **Commonly Asked Questions in Pregnancy**

**(There are many questions about medications in pregnancy; these are addressed on another page).**

**EARLY IN THE PREGNANCY WHEN I DID NOT KNOW I WAS PREGNANT, I DRANK WINE, BEER, OR ALCOHOL. WILL THIS HARM MY BABY?**

Now that you know that you are pregnant, you should avoid all alcohol. A small amount of alcohol before missing a period is not likely to hurt the baby. Early in pregnancy the baby has different blood circulation.

**HOW MUCH CALCIUM I NEED TO TAKE?**

The recommended daily allowance during pregnancy is 1500 mg daily. TUMS antacid is the easiest sources of calcium to take.

**IS FISH SAFE TO EAT WHEN I AM PREGNANT?**

It is recommended that you follow state warning labels against eating fish from waters with high mercury levels some fish (shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tuna and tile fish) may contain levels of mercury that could lead to brain damage in the developing fetus..

**HOW SAFE IS IT TO EXERCISE?**

If an exercise causes cramping, shortness of breath, or pain, then you should decrease the intensity or stop exercising. You should be able to carry on a conversation while you exercise. This is usually the equivalent to a pulse below 140 beats/minute. Scuba diving, skiing, horseback riding, and water skiing are discouraged. It is recommended that you exercise often during the week.

**IS THE BLOOD TEST FOR AFP COVERED BY MY INSURANCE?**

Call your own insurance company to ask if they will cover the test. State charges for this varies. Not all Insurance companies will reimburse for the AFP test. Check with our office for the current charges.

**CAN I HAVE A FLU SHOT DURING MY PREGNANCY?**

You may have the flu vaccine if you will be in your second or third trimester of pregnancy during the flu season.

**WILL STRESS HURT THE BABY?**

No.

## CAN I BE SEXUALLY ACTIVE AND HAVE INTERCOURSE DURING PREGNANCY?

Yes, you may be sexually active until labor starts unless you are instructed otherwise. There is no evidence that sex causes miscarriage or premature labor. If your pregnancy is complicated, discuss this when you are seen in the office. If you need lubrication you can use KY jelly or a similar product safely.

## IS IT NORMAL TO FEEL PRESSURE IN MY LOWER PELVIS.

Yes.

## WHY DO I HAVE ACHES AND PAINS IN THE PELVIC AREA?

Early in pregnancy it is normal to feel cramping as the uterus grows and to feel discomfort as the ligaments stretch. During the second trimester, it is normal to feel pains in the pelvis as the uterus grows, your skin stretches, and the baby moves around. During the third trimester, it is common to have a backache and sciatica. Sciatica causes shooting pains down the back of the leg and buttocks.

Towards the end of the third trimester, the ligaments in the hips and pelvis loosen causing discomfort. The baby may kick nerves on the inside of the uterus causing shooting pains toward your upper abdomen or vagina. Areas of numbness may also occur on your abdomen. If you are concerned about pre-term labor, please call our office.

## WHEN CAN I EXPECT TO FEEL THE BABY MOVE?

Babies are first felt at about 20 to 22 weeks in a first pregnancy, in subsequent pregnancies this may be as early as 16 weeks of pregnancy. You may not feel regular movements until 28 weeks of pregnancy.

## PLEASE EXPLAIN HOW YOU KNOW THE NUMBER OF WEEKS I AM IN THE PREGNANCY.

Pregnancy is 38 weeks from conception. Because most patients do not know the conception date, the due date is estimated as weeks 40 from the first day of their last menstrual period. But a more accurate way to estimate a due date is by doing a vaginal ultrasound early in the pregnancy and measuring the crown rump length.

## DOES IT MATTER HOW I SLEEP?CAN I SLEEP ON MY BACK?

You may sleep on your back until the third trimester as long as you are comfortable. Your major blood vessels run to the right of your spine. If your uterus compresses these blood vessels you may become nauseated, dizzy, or woken up frequently by the babies activity in the uterus. Placing a pillow or roll a small towel underneath your right hip when sleeping should prevent these symptoms.

## IS IT NORMAL TO FEEL AS IF MY HEART IS RACING?

Yes, palpitations are normal and common. Notify the health care provider if you have fainting spells that are related to palpitations.

AFTER MY VAGINAL EXAM I NOTICED SOME SPOTTING, ALSO AFTER INTERCOURSE, IS IT NORMAL? (During the later part of the third trimester)  
Yes, The spotting should resolve in about 24-48 hours. Call if you have heavy bleeding. It is common to have spotting or bleeding in these situations as a result of cervical softening. The cervix must soften before dilation can occur.

I HAVE TO TRAVEL FOR MY WORK, CAN I FLY?

You should not fly after your 35th week of pregnancy. If you should decide to go before the 35 weeks, you should weigh the benefits versus the small risks involved due to stress and strain of travel. We recommend that you do not take international flights. It is important to remember to drink plenty of water, and to get up and walk about the cabin of the plane every 30 minutes. Support socks or stockings are also recommended. Check with your insurance company to make sure you are covered outside the San Jose area, if you have an emergency.

WILL HIGHER ELEVATIONS AND ALTITUDE BE HARMFUL TO THE BABY?

No, but if you have any difficulty breathing you should return to a lower elevation.

I HAVE VARICOSE VEINS. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO ALLEVIATE THE DISCOMFORT AND PREVENT THEM FROM GETTING WORSE?

Avoid long periods of standing or sitting. When sitting elevate your legs above the level of your hips. Try wearing support panty hose throughout the day. Exercise, such as walking 20 to 30 minutes daily, is also helpful. If you are experiencing uncomfortable vulva varicosities, wearing maternity exercise or bicycle shorts may help. Maternity/vulva support belts are also helpful.

MY FEET ARE SWOLLEN. IS THIS NORMAL?

Mild swelling of the ankles and legs is related to the normal and necessary increase in body fluids during pregnancy. To ease the discomfort, elevate your legs or lie down when you can, wear comfortable shoes, and avoid elastic-top socks or stockings. Drinking a minimum of 8 to 10, eight ounce glasses of water a day will help to avoid excess water retention. Support hose may also help to ease the discomfort.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A HOT BATH. IS THIS OKAY?

Studies show that hot saunas during the first trimester may cause miscarriage. There is no evidence that hot baths cause any fetal harm.

IS IT OKAY TO HAVE MY HAIR COLORED, HIGHLIGHTED, OR PERMED?  
WHAT ABOUT ARTIFICIAL NAILS?

There is no information that any of these procedures will hurt your baby. Sometimes, perms or coloring do not "take" as well in pregnancy. Discuss this with your hairdresser. Please weigh any benefits against any unknown potential risks. Being in a very well ventilated area will help.

#### MY DENTIST NEEDS TO TAKE X-RAYS. IS THIS OKAY?

You should continue to care for your teeth in the normal manner. If X-rays are necessary, your dentist will shield the baby. Filling cavities or taking antibiotics if prescribed by your dentist is safe and desirable as pregnancy can increase dental disease. Ampicillin is the most common antibiotic and is safe during pregnancy.

#### WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO CHICKENPOX?

It is likely that you have had the disease as a child and are therefore immune. There is no danger to your baby if you have had the chicken pox in the past. If you are not sure, a blood test can be done to determine if you are immune. If you are not immune, please call your physician.

#### WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO FIFTH'S DISEASE?

It is likely that you have had the disease as a child and are therefore immune. If you are not sure, a blood test can be done to determine if you are immune. It is not likely that you will contract the disease with casual contact. Good hand-washing and hygiene are important to prevent infection. Please call your physician if you have been exposed.

THE BABYS HEART RATE IS FAST; DOES THIS MEAN THAT THE BABY IS A GIRL OR A BOY?

The heart rate does not determine whether the baby is a girl or boy. The only way to definitely determine the sex of the baby is through genetic amniocentesis which is usually done after the age of 35. Additionally, an ultrasound done at about 20 weeks can often give us information regarding the sex of the baby.