

Body Changes and Discomforts During Pregnancy		
During pregnancy, you might have:	What might help:	Call a health care provider if:
<p><b>Body aches:</b> As your uterus expands, you may feel aches and pains in the back, abdomen, groin area, and thighs. Many women also have backaches and aching near the pelvic bone because of the pressure of the baby's head, increased weight, and loosening joints. Some pregnant women have pain that runs from the lower back, down the back of one leg, to the knee or foot. This pain is called <b>sciatica</b>. It is thought to occur when the uterus puts pressure on the sciatic nerve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lie down.</li> <li>• Rest.</li> <li>• Apply heat.---But not on abdomen (LC)</li> </ul>	<p>Pain does not get better.</p>
<p><b>Breast changes:</b> A woman's breasts increase in size and fullness during pregnancy. As the due date approaches, hormone changes will cause your breasts to get even bigger to prepare for breastfeeding. Your breasts may feel full, heavy, or tender. In the third trimester, some pregnant women begin to leak colostrum from their breasts. Colostrum is the first milk that your breasts produce for the baby. It is a thick, yellowish fluid containing antibodies that protect newborns from infection.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear a maternity bra with good support.</li> <li>• Put pads in your bra to absorb leakage.</li> </ul>	<p>You feel a lump or have nipple changes or discharge (that is not colostrum) or skin changes.</p>
<p><b>Constipation:</b> Many pregnant women report that they have constipation. Signs of constipation include having hard, dry stools; having fewer than three bowel movements per week; and having painful bowel movements. Higher levels of hormones due to pregnancy slow down digestion and relax muscles in the bowels, leaving many women constipated. In addition, the pressure of the expanding uterus on the bowels can contribute to constipation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water daily.</li> <li>• Don't drink caffeine.</li> <li>• Eat fiber-rich foods, such as fresh or dried fruit, raw vegetables, and whole-grain cereals and breads.</li> <li>• Try mild physical activity.</li> </ul>	<p>Your constipation is an ongoing problem.</p>

<p><b>Dizziness:</b> Many pregnant women report being dizzy and lightheaded throughout their pregnancies. Fainting is rare but does happen, even in some healthy pregnant women. These symptoms occur for many reasons. The growth of more blood vessels in early pregnancy, the pressure of the expanding uterus on blood vessels, and the body's increased need for food all can make a pregnant woman feel lightheaded and dizzy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand up slowly.</li> <li>• Avoid standing for too long.</li> <li>• Don't skip meals.</li> <li>• Lie on your left side.</li> <li>• Wear loose clothing.</li> <li>• Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water daily. (LC)</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>You feel faint and have vaginal bleeding or abdominal pain.</p>
<p><b>Fatigue and sleep problems:</b> During your pregnancy, you might feel tired even after you've had a lot of sleep. Many women find they are exhausted in the first trimester. Don't worry, this feeling is normal! It is your body's way of telling you that you need more rest. In the second trimester, tiredness is usually replaced with a feeling of well-being and energy. In the third trimester, exhaustion often sets in again. As you get larger, sleeping may become more difficult. The baby's movements, bathroom runs, and an increase in the body's metabolism might interrupt or disturb your sleep. Leg cramping can also interfere with a good night's sleep.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lie on your left side.</li> <li>• Use pillows for support, such as behind your back, tucked between your knees, and under your tummy.</li> <li>• Practice good sleep habits, such as going to bed and getting up at the same time each day and using your bed only for sleep and sex.</li> <li>• Go to bed a little earlier.</li> <li>• Nap if you are not able to get enough sleep at night.</li> <li>• Drink needed fluids earlier in the day, so you can drink less in the hours before sleeping.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Heartburn and indigestion:</b> Hormones and the pressure of the growing uterus cause indigestion and heartburn. Pregnancy hormones slow down the muscles of the digestive tract, so food tends to move more slowly and digestion is sluggish. This causes many pregnant women to feel bloated. Hormones also relax the valve that separates the esophagus from the stomach, which allows food and acids to come back up from the stomach to the esophagus. The food and acid cause the burning feeling of heartburn. As</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat several small meals instead of three large meals, and eat slowly.</li> <li>• Drink fluids between meals, not with meals.</li> <li>• Don't eat greasy and fried foods.</li> <li>• Avoid citrus fruits or juices and spicy foods.</li> <li>• Do not eat or drink within a few hours of bedtime.</li> <li>• Do not lie down right after meals.</li> </ul>	<p>Symptoms don't improve after trying these suggestions. Ask your health care provider about using an antacid.</p>

<p>your baby gets bigger, the uterus pushes on the stomach, making heartburn more common in later pregnancy.</p>		
<p><b>Hemorrhoids:</b> Hemorrhoids are swollen and bulging veins in the rectum. They can cause itching, pain, and bleeding. Up to 50% of pregnant women get hemorrhoids. Hemorrhoids are common during pregnancy for many reasons. During pregnancy, blood volume increases greatly, which can cause veins to enlarge. The expanding uterus also puts pressure on the veins in the rectum. Plus, constipation can worsen hemorrhoids. Hemorrhoids usually improve after delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink lots of fluids.</li> <li>• Eat fiber-rich foods such as whole grains, raw or cooked leafy green vegetables, and fruits.</li> <li>• Try not to strain with bowel movements.</li> <li>• Talk to your health care provider about using products such as witch hazel to soothe hemorrhoids.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Itching:</b> About 20% of pregnant women feel itchy during pregnancy. Usually women feel itchy in the abdomen, but red, itchy palms and soles of the feet are also common complaints. Pregnancy hormones and stretching skin are probably to blame for most of your discomfort. Usually the itchy feeling goes away after delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use gentle soaps and moisturizing creams.</li> <li>• Avoid taking hot showers and baths.</li> <li>• Avoid itchy fabrics.</li> </ul>	<p>Symptoms don't improve after a week of self-care.</p>
<p><b>Leg cramps:</b> At different times during your pregnancy, you might have sudden muscle spasms in your legs or feet. They usually occur at night. These cramps are due to a change in the way your body processes calcium.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gently stretch muscles.</li> <li>• Get mild exercise.</li> <li>• For sudden cramps, flex your foot forward.</li> <li>• Eat calcium-rich foods.</li> <li>• Ask your health care provider about calcium supplements.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Morning sickness:</b> In the first trimester, hormone changes can cause nausea and vomiting. This symptom is called "morning sickness," although it can occur at any time of day. Morning sickness usually tapers off by the second trimester.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat several small meals instead of three large meals to keep your stomach from being empty.</li> <li>• Don't lie down after meals.</li> <li>• Eat dry toast, saltines, or dry cereals before getting out of bed in the morning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have flu-like symptoms, which may signal a more serious condition.</li> <li>• You have severe, constant nausea and/or vomiting several times every day.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat bland foods that are low in fat and easy to digest, such as cereal, rice, and bananas.</li> <li>• Sip on water, weak tea, or clear soft drinks or suck on ice chips.</li> <li>• Avoid smells that upset your stomach.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Nasal problems:</b> Nosebleeds and nasal stuffiness are common during pregnancy. They are caused by the increased amount of blood in your body and hormones acting on the tissues of your nose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blow your nose gently.</li> <li>• Drink fluids and use a cool mist humidifier.</li> <li>• To stop a nosebleed, squeeze your nose between your thumb and forefinger for a few minutes.</li> </ul>	<p>Nosebleeds are frequent and do not stop after a few minutes.</p>
<p><b>Numb or tingling hands:</b> Feelings of swelling, tingling, and numbness in the fingers and hands, called carpal tunnel syndrome, can occur during pregnancy. These symptoms are due to swelling of tissues in the narrow passages in your wrists, and they should disappear after delivery.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take frequent breaks to rest your hands.</li> <li>• Ask your health care provider about fitting you for a splint to keep your wrists straight.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Stretch marks and skin changes:</b> Stretch marks are red, pink, or brown streaks on the skin. Most often they appear on the thighs, buttocks, abdomen, and breasts. These scars are caused by the stretching of the skin, and they usually appear in the second half of pregnancy.</p> <p>Some women notice other skin changes during pregnancy. For many women, the nipples become darker and browner during pregnancy. Many pregnant women also develop a dark line (called the <b>linea nigra</b>) on the skin that runs from the belly button down to the pubic hairline. Patches of darker skin, usually over the cheeks, forehead, nose, or upper lip, also are common. Patches often match on both sides of the face. These spots</p>	<p>Be patient—stretch marks and other changes usually fade after delivery.</p>	

<p>are called <b>melasma</b> or <b>chloasma</b> and are more common in darker-skinned women.</p>		
<p><b>Swelling:</b> Many women develop mild swelling in the face, hands, or ankles at some point in their pregnancies. As the due date approaches, swelling often becomes more noticeable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink 8 to 10 glasses of fluids daily.</li> <li>• Don't drink caffeine or eat salty foods.</li> <li>• Rest and elevate your feet.</li> <li>• Ask your health care provider about support hose.</li> </ul>	<p>Your hands or feet swell suddenly or you rapidly gain weight, which may be signs of preeclampsia.</p>
<p><b>Urinary frequency and leaking:</b> Temporary bladder control problems are common in pregnancy. Your unborn baby pushes down on the bladder, urethra, and pelvic floor muscles. This pressure can lead to a more frequent need to urinate, as well as leaking of urine when sneezing, coughing, or laughing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take frequent bathroom breaks.</li> <li>• Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.</li> <li>• Do Kegel exercises to tone pelvic muscles.</li> </ul>	<p>You experience burning along with frequency of urination, which may be a sign of an infection.</p>
<p><b>Varicose veins:</b> During pregnancy, blood volume increases greatly, which can cause veins to enlarge. In addition, pressure on the large veins behind the uterus causes the blood to slow in its return to the heart. For these reasons, varicose veins in the legs and anus (hemorrhoids) are more common in pregnancy. Varicose veins look like swollen veins raised above the surface of the skin. They can be twisted or bulging and are dark purple or blue in color. They are found most often on the backs of the calves or on the inside of the leg.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid wearing tight knee-high stockings or socks.</li> <li>• Sit with your legs and feet raised.</li> </ul>	