

## Fact Sheet

### Pregnancy discomforts and concerns

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Your body goes through many changes during your pregnancy and this can sometimes cause discomfort and concern.

#### Morning Sickness or Nausea

Morning sickness is a common symptom of early pregnancy that will usually go away by the end of the third month. This can be from the hormonal changes during the pregnancy. Some women also have heartburn or a burning sensation in their stomach throat or chest. To help improve these signs you can try the following

- eating crackers, dry toast or cereal before getting out of bed
- eat 5 smaller meals during the day rather than 3 big meals
- avoid high fat, fried, spicy, acidic or greasy foods. Avoid caffeine
- sleep with your head raised up on a pillow
- call your doctor or midwife if you are not able to keep fluids down for over 24 hours, you have dark urine or you feel weak or dizzy.

#### Backache in pregnancy

During pregnancy, the ligaments in your body naturally become softer and stretch to prepare you for labour. This can put a strain on the joints of your lower back and pelvis, which can cause backache. There are some things that you can try to help reduce the pain and discomfort.

- avoid lifting heavy objects
- bend your knees and keep your back straight when lifting or picking up something from the floor
- move your feet when turning round to avoid twisting your spine
- sit with your back straight and well supported

- make sure you get enough rest, particularly later in pregnancy

- wear flat shoes

Some activities may also help with your symptoms

- aquarobics (gentle exercise in water)
- acupuncture
- hot packs
- regular exercise, including walking.

#### Constipation

Pregnancy hormones can slow down the muscles in the bowel and for some women this can cause constipation.

Things to try:

- drink plenty of water every day
- eat a high fibre diet that includes wholegrain cereals and fruit and vegetables
- staying active and exercising can help prevent constipation

#### Abdominal pain or contractions

You may feel some pain in the groin area as your uterus grows. This pain can get worse with sudden movements or prolonged walking.

- **call your midwife or doctor right away** if you are experiencing severe pain
- **braxton hicks** contractions are mild contractions that are usually painless and irregular. These are common and do not need treatment.

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### Headaches and Dizziness

For a headache call your doctor or midwife for advice on which over the counter medication is right for you to take. **Do not** take Aspirin or ibuprofen.

- Please call you doctor or midwife if your headache or dizziness, blurred vision gets worse or does not go away
- For dizziness change positions slowly.

### Swelling of Hands and Feet

Due to the extra fluids in your tissues many women experience swelling in their hands and feet during the pregnancy. If you stand for long periods of time particularly towards the end of your pregnancy swelling in your legs and hands may occur.

Swelling can be a symptom of high blood pressure or pre-eclampsia so call your doctor or midwife if you have excessive swelling in your hands or feet which is not relieved by rest overnight.

- avoid standing or sitting for long periods of time
- maintain regular exercise
- rest when possible with your feet elevated
- call you doctor or midwife if you are experiencing swelling for several days in a row

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