

Many women are surprised by the body changes that arise during pregnancy. Find out what you can do to feel better.

### Body Changes and Discomforts During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, you might have:	What might help:	Call the doctor if:
<p><b>Body Aches</b></p> <p>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 due the pressure of the baby's head, increased weight, and loosening joints. Some pregnant women complain of pain that runs from the lower back, down the back of one leg, to the knee or foot. This is called sciatica. 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.</li> </ul>	<p>Pain does not get better.</p>
<p><b>Breast Changes</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 bra to absorb leakage.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Constipation</b></p> <p>Many pregnant women complain of constipation. Signs of constipation include having hard, dry stools; fewer than three bowel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water daily.</li> <li>• Don't drink caffeine.</li> </ul>	

<p>movements per week; and painful bowel movements.</p> <p>Higher levels of hormones due to pregnancy slow down digestion and relax muscles in the bowels leaving many women constipated. Plus, the pressure of the expanding uterus on the bowels can contribute to constipation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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><b>Dizziness</b></p> <p>Many pregnant women complain of dizziness and lightheadedness throughout their pregnancies. Fainting is rare but does happen even in some healthy pregnant women. There are many reasons for these symptoms. 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> </ul>	<p>You feel faint and have vaginal bleeding or abdominal pain.</p>
<p><b>Fatigue, Sleep Problems</b></p> <p>During your pregnancy, you might feel tired even after you've had a lot of sleep. Many women find they're exhausted in the first trimester. Don't worry, this is normal! This 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. But in the third trimester, exhaustion often sets in again. As you get larger, sleeping may become more difficult.</p> <p>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</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 more fluids in the day &amp; you can drink less</li> </ul>	

	hours before bed.	
<p><b>Heartburn and Indigestion</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Hormones also relax the valve that separates the esophagus from the stomach. This allows food and acids to come back up from the stomach to the esophagus. The food and acid causes the burning feeling of heartburn. As your baby gets bigger, the uterus pushes on the stomach making heartburn more common in later pregnancy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat 5-6 small meals instead of 3 large meals — 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 and spicy foods.</li> <li>• Do not eat 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 doctor about using an antacid.</p>
<p><b>Hemorrhoids</b></p> <p>Hemorrhoids are swollen and bulging veins in the rectum. They can cause itching, pain, and bleeding. Up to 50 percent 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, like whole grains, raw or cooked leafy green vegetables, and fruits.</li> <li>• Try not to strain with bowel movements.</li> </ul>	<p>Talk to your doctor about using any products</p>
<p><b>Itching</b></p> <p>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 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></p> <p>At different times during your pregnancy, you might have sudden muscle spasms in your legs or feet. They usually occur at night. This is 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 doctor about calcium supplements.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Morning Sickness</b></p> <p>In the first trimester hormone changes can cause nausea and vomiting. This is called "morning sickness," although it can occur at any time of day.</p> <p>Morning sickness usually tapers off by the second trimester.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat 6 to 8 small meals instead of 3 large meals to keep your stomach from being empty.</li> <li>• Eat dry toast, saltines, or dry cereals before getting out of bed in the morning.</li> <li>• Eat bland foods that are low in fat and easy to digest, such as cereal, rice, and bananas.</li> <li>• Avoid smells that upset your stomach.</li> </ul>	<p>You have flu-like symptoms, which may signal a more serious condition.</p> <p>You have severe, constant nausea and/or vomiting several times every day.</p>
<p><b>Nasal Problems</b></p> <p>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> </ul>	<p>Nosebleeds are frequent and do not stop after a few minutes.</p>
<p><b>Numb or Tingling Hands</b></p> <p>Feelings of swelling, tingling, and numbness in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take frequent breaks to rest hands.</li> </ul>	

<p>fingers and hands 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>		
<p><b>Stretch Marks, Skin Changes</b></p> <p>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 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. Patches of darker skin usually over the cheeks, forehead, nose, or upper lip also are common.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be patient — stretch marks and other changes usually fade after delivery.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Swelling</b></p> <p>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 doctor about support hose.</li> </ul>	<p>Your hands or feet swell suddenly or you rapidly gain weight — it may be preeclampsia.</p>
<p><b>Urinary Frequency and Leaking</b></p> <p>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 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 only after checking with your Doctor to tone pelvic muscles.</li> </ul>	<p>You experience burning along with frequency of urination — it may be an infection.</p>

