Common Discomforts of Pregnancy

Pregnancy brings many changes to your body, and each pregnancy is different. Use these tips to help you feel great and reduce discomfort throughout your pregnancy.

Nausea or heartburn
- Eat crackers, toast or dry cereal before getting out of bed in the morning or whenever you feel sick.
- Eat 5 to 6 small meals during the day.
- Drink water between meals, not at meals.
- Use an extra pillow for your head when sleeping, and wait at least 90 minutes before lying down after eating.
- If you vomit or have heartburn, rinse your mouth with 1 cup of water mixed with 1 teaspoon of baking soda. Drink fluids low in acid, such as water.
- **Avoid** food smells that make nausea worse.
- **Avoid** eating greasy, spicy or fried foods.
- **Avoid** wearing tight fitting clothes.
- **Avoid** bending over at the waist. Use your legs and do squats instead.

Constipation or hemorrhoids
- Keep bowel movements soft and regular by eating whole grain or bran cereals, and raw fruits and vegetables for fiber.
- Do low to moderate exercise as directed by your provider.
- Drink ten, 8-ounce cups of fluid each day.
- **Avoid** using laxatives or enemas.
- **Avoid** straining or pushing when having a bowel movement.

Urinating often or leakage
- Drink less fluids 2 hours before bedtime.
- Use the bathroom often.
- Do Kegel exercises. Kegels are done by squeezing the muscles around the vagina, urethra and rectum and holding them for 3 to 5 seconds. Slowly increase holding to 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times and do Kegels at least 3 times each day.
- **Avoid** caffeine in coffee, tea, sodas, sport drinks and energy drinks.
Swelling of hands and feet

- Wear supportive shoes.
- Prop your feet up when sitting or lying down.
- Add protein to your diet, such as eggs, beans, tofu, meat and yogurt.
- Avoid standing for long periods of time.

Leg cramps

- When you have a leg cramp, work to straighten your leg. Alternate flexing and relaxing your foot.
- Stretch your calf muscles during the day.
- Do low to moderate exercise as directed by your provider.
- Add calcium to your diet, such as dairy, leafy greens and calcium fortified juice.
- Avoid crossing your legs or sitting in a position that reduces blood flow.

Low back pain

- Use a side-lying position with pillows between the knees, behind the back and under the abdomen to give you support.
- Rest on a supportive mattress.
- Wear low-heeled or athletic shoes.
- Sit up straight and avoid slouching.
- Change positions often, whether sitting, standing or lying down.
- Get physical activity to build muscle strength.
- Use your legs to help you squat to pick up objects, instead of bending over.
- Use massage, take a warm shower or apply ice for 15 minutes at a time (then remove) to help with low back pain.
- Avoid over the counter medicines until you talk with your provider.

Breast tenderness

- Wear a support bra that is not too tight.
- Wear a bra to bed at night.

Trouble sleeping

- Turn off your smart phone, TV and tablet at least 1 or more hours before bedtime. The light from these devices can make it harder to go to sleep.
- Exercise earlier in the day. Late day exercise can wake up your body.
- Use relaxation, meditation and other strategies to get ready for sleep.
- Use pillows to cradle your body.
- Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea, sodas, sport drinks and energy drinks, especially after 2:00 PM each day.
Feel dizzy or light-headed
- Eat 5 to 6 small meals every 2 to 3 hours, so you are not hungry.
- Drink ten, 8-ounce cups of fluid each day.
- Lie down on your left side.
- Change positions slowly, such as from lying to sitting or sitting to standing.
- Sit down to do tasks instead of standing.
- Avoid being in temperature extremes, such as too much sun, cold and heat.
- **Tell your provider if light-headedness does not improve.**

Mouth issues
If you have overgrowths of gum tissue, called pregnancy tumors, visit your dentist to have plaque removed. You will need a medical release from your provider to see your dentist. The growths often disappear on their own after baby's birth.

Nosebleeds
Nosebleeds are more common during pregnancy. To stop a nosebleed, squeeze your nose gently between your thumb and forefinger for a few minutes. Tilt your head forward to avoid swallowing the blood and breathe through your mouth until bleeding stops. **Contact your provider if bleeding is severe or does not improve.**

Skin issues
Itching is more common on the hands, feet and abdomen as skin stretches for baby’s growth. Use gentle soaps for cleaning, hand washing and laundry. Take warm, not hot, showers.
You may notice brown patches on your face, darkening of the skin around your nipples, a dark line on your abdomen and stretch marks that are all common from hormone changes. Use sunscreen to protect your skin.

Varicose veins
Varicose veins look swollen, raised or bulging.
- Keep feet slightly raised when sitting and avoid standing for long periods of time.
- Avoid tight-fitting clothing.
- Avoid crossing your legs.

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**Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**
For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at **614-293-3707** or e-mail **health-info@osu.edu.**

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