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### **Maternal Changes and Discomforts of Pregnancy**

**FATIGUE OR SLEEPINESS- This may last through the fourth month.**

REASONS- Development of placenta; physiologic adjustment to pregnancy.

WHAT HELPS: Nap or go to bed earlier at night; don't plan late nights out for awhile. Listen to your body. You will have more energy when your body has adjusted to your pregnancy and the placenta is essentially complete.

#### **URINARY FREQUENCY**

Reasons- Hormonal changes and enlarging uterus. As the uterus enlarges, pressure on your bladder will increase. Softening of the lower part of the uterus and enlargement cause it to become more ante-flexed (bent forward) in the first trimester. After this, it will grow upward and take the pressure off of the bladder (until the last trimester, when the abdomen becomes crowded by the greatly enlarged uterus). Urination at night, which interrupts sleep, is caused by the improved blood flow, which occurs when you are lying down.

WHAT HELPS- Plan your day for frequent bathroom breaks. Don't drink just before bedtime (within 1-2 hours) to get a better night's sleep. Limit your caffeine intake.

**URINARY TRACT INFECTION-**frequent urge to urinate accompanied by burning and/or sharp lower abdominal pain.

REASONS- Pressure of the uterus on the bladder may prevent complete emptying, allowing urine to stagnate and bacteria to multiply. Increased vaginal discharge may collect and work into the urethra.

WHAT HELPS- Drink plenty of fluids, particularly water. Unsweetened cranberry juice may be helpful (4-6 ounces per day). Avoid coffee, tea, alcohol, and caffeinated drinks. Empty your bladder just before and after sexual intercourse. Each time you urinate, take time to be sure your bladder is completely emptied. Wear cotton-crotch underwear. Avoid tight-fitting clothing. Don't wear pantyhose under slacks or sleep with panties on. Keep the vaginal and perineal areas meticulously clean. Wash daily and avoid perfumed soaps and powders in the perineal area. Always wipe from front to back. Don't use bubble baths. Maintain good nutrition. Always finish medications prescribed for urinary tract infections unless you are instructed otherwise.

## **CONSTIPATION**

REASONS- Hormonal changes slow intestinal activity and cause fluid to shift to tissues.

WHAT HELPS- Drink plenty of fluids (8 eight-ounce glasses of water per day). Include fresh fruits and vegetables in your diet. Prune and apple juice are often effective. Eat more fiber. You may also try Metamucil or FiberCon. Cut up vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots, and keep them in a container in the refrigerator to snack on. You may use non-fat or low-fat vegetable dips, if you have trouble eating plain vegetables. Try bran cereals or muffins. Increase exercise to increase intestinal activity. Walking a mile per day (if not contraindicated) can be helpful for constipation, as well as, for a general feeling of well-being.

## **NAUSEA/VOMITING (MORNING SICKNESS)**

REASONS- Increased hormones (estrogen) and other physiologic changes. It can also be related to low blood sugar and slowed intestinal activity.

WHAT HELPS- Crackers or dry toast before getting up in the morning. Frequent small meals are better than two or three large ones. Don't get too hungry. Avoid greasy, fatty, acidic, or spicy foods. Avoid smells that bother you (the odors of bacon and fried foods frequently are not tolerated). Drink fluids if possible. Sometimes they will settle better than solids and will also keep you from becoming dehydrated. Take fluids and solids at different times. Sweets or high carbohydrate snacks may help (Popsicles are a frequent choice). However, some find that small, frequent, high protein snacks work better. Cold compresses to the back of the neck may also help. If you are unable to keep anything down at all, call us. Morning sickness can be very unpleasant but is usually limited to the first few months of pregnancy.

## **BREAST CHANGES**

REASONS- Hormonal changes cause increased blood supply in preparation for milk production. Breasts enlarge, become tender, and the areola (darker area around the nipple) becomes darker. The enlargement continues throughout pregnancy, but the tingling and tenderness subsides after the first 3-4 months.

WHAT HELPS- Wear a larger and well-supporting bra.

## **FLATULENCE (GAS), INDIGESTION, HEARTBURN**

REASONS- Hormonal changes, which relax smooth muscle, slow gastric activity. This slowing of food digestion increases absorption of nutrients necessary for baby's growth and development.

WHAT HELPS- Eat slowly and chew thoroughly. Eliminate foods that cause discomfort. Highly seasoned foods, fatty foods, processed meats, chocolate, coffee, and carbonated beverages are examples of frequently offending foods. Don't wear tight clothes and avoid bending over at the waist. Sleep with your head elevated about 6 inches. **DON'T SMOKE!** If these measures don't bring relief, you may take Tums or Maalox occasionally (overuse can cause a rebound effect and worsening of the heartburn). Many women find that liquids such as Mylanta or Gaviscon work even better because the liquid coats the stomach. Do not take antacids which are high in sodium, such as

Alka Seltzer or sodium bicarbonate. Antacids which contain magnesium can cause diarrhea, and those with calcium are associated with constipation.

### **COMPLEXION PROBLEMS**

REASONS- Increased secretion of oils caused by hormonal changes.

WHAT HELPS- Good nutrition. Drink at least 8 eight-ounce glasses of water each day. Water is a very effective pore-purifier. Wash your face often with a gentle cleanser. Avoid greasy creams and makeup. Don't overdo washing because dry skin can be a problem, especially in the cold weather.

### **EMOTIONAL INSTABILITY SIMILAR TO PREMENSTRUAL FEELINGS**

REASONS- Hormonal changes and adjustment to pregnancy and its responsibilities. Also, your changing family requires adjustment. If this is a first baby, you and your husband must adjust to an entirely different family dynamic-it won't be just the two of you anymore. This transition has the potential for an even deeper relationship, but it can be frightening at times. If this is not a first baby, older siblings must also adjust to the expected new member. It is likely that they may also feel a bit frightened about their changing family and start demanding more of your attention.

WHAT HELPS- Open communication with your spouse or partner. Prepare children for the new baby by reading stories about the new baby or participation in Sibling Classes. Most of your hospitals offer these classes and we encourage you to attend.

### **HEADACHES**

REASONS- Tension or stress of adjusting to pregnancy and to hormonal changes. Sinus headaches may be due to congestion of mucous membranes caused by pregnancy hormones. Failure to eat regular meals may be responsible, since hunger can generate headaches.

WHAT HELPS- Eat regularly and try to get enough rest. You may take 2 tablets of acetaminophen (plain or extra strength Tylenol) as directed on the bottle to relieve headaches. Steam from the shower may also help relieve sinus congestion. Try to stay out of stuffy, overheated rooms as much as possible. If this is not effective for congestion, you may take plain Sudafed according to package instructions as well as Tylenol Cold or Tylenol Sinus. Since many headaches in pregnancy are a result of tension, peace and quiet can work wonders. Lie down in a quiet, dark room. Try relaxation exercises. Massage of the neck and shoulders may bring relief. If you have persistent headaches after 28 weeks' gestation or if your headaches are associated with blurred vision or edema (swelling) of the hands, feet, and/or face, call us.

### **WEIGHT GAIN/TIGHT FITTING CLOTHES/EDEMA**

REASONS- Weight gain of about 3-5 pounds is average in the first trimester. In addition, bloating may make waistbands tighter. After the first trimester, expect an additional 5 pounds by 20 weeks' gestation for a total of 10 pounds in the first half of pregnancy and about a pound per week for the second 20 weeks of pregnancy for a total of 25-30 pounds for the entire pregnancy. If you gain weight rapidly (3-5 pounds over a couple of days) you may be developing edema (swelling). Some edema is normal toward the end of pregnancy, especially in warm weather. The enlarging uterus interferes with blood return from the legs, resulting in pooling in lower extremities. Edema worsens with prolonged standing, constrictive clothing, hot weather, and excessive salt intake.

WHAT HELPS- Wear loose-fitting clothes. Usually wearing maternity clothes helps. If you eat a nutritious diet, but avoid junk foods, you should gain around 25-30 pounds during the pregnancy. If you are not beginning pregnancy at an optimal weight for your height and build, we will make additional recommendations. If you are noticing edema toward the end of pregnancy, try elevating the legs and hips as much as possible. Rest on your left side. Water is a natural diuretic, so make sure you drink at least 8 glasses per day (more in hot weather). If you develop rapid edema (particularly swelling of the face) or weight gain associated with headache or blurred vision, call us right away.

### **SHORTNESS OF BREATH**

REASONS- This may begin to occur in early pregnancy due to hormones which cause a decreased tolerance to carbon dioxide and brief feelings of breathlessness. Later in pregnancy, during the last trimester, the enlarging uterus presses upward against the diaphragm and allows less room for lung expansion.

WHAT HELPS- Be reassured that this feeling is normal as long as it is not associated with chest pain, heaviness, or difficult breathing. In late pregnancy, straighten your posture, sleep with two pillows, and avoid overexertion.

### **NASAL CONGESTION/NOSE STUFFINESS/POSTNASAL DRAINAGE**

REASONS- Probably related to high levels of estrogen which bring increased blood flow to the mucous membranes of the nose, causing them to soften and swell.

WHAT HELPS- Don't use nasal sprays unless we instruct you to do so. Do be sure that your fluid intake is adequate to compensate for fluid lost with nasal drainage. The problem is more common in winter when hot, dry air is forced into the house. The use of a humidifier will help. Gentle nose blowing is important in order not to damage nasal mucous membranes.

### **FAINTNESS AND DIZZINESS**

REASONS- During pregnancy hormonal changes and compression from the enlarging uterus may cause blood to pool in the lower extremities. Therefore, getting up too quickly or standing for a long period may cause a temporary low blood pressure and resulting dizziness. Other causes include low blood sugar (not eating frequently enough) and anemia (too little iron in blood).

WHAT HELPS- Change from a sitting to standing position slowly (don't jump up) and don't stand for prolonged periods. Avoid wearing constricting clothing, especially constricting hose. Don't go too long between meals. Carry snacks with you if necessary. Always report dizzy spells on your next visit. If you faint or have persistent dizzy spells, call us right away.

### **BACKACHE**

REASONS- The usually stable joints of the pelvis begin to loosen up to allow easier passage for the baby at delivery. In addition, your enlarging abdomen throws your body off balance. To compensate, you tend to bring your shoulders back and arch your back. Also, standing with your belly thrust forward will aggravate the problem. The result is deeply curved lower back, strained muscles, and pain.

WHAT HELPS- Good posture. Avoid excessive weight gain. Don't wear very high or very flat heels. Use proper body mechanics to lift and don't stretch upward to put something away. Don't stay on your feet for long periods if you can avoid it. If you must, stand with one foot on a stool with your knee bent. Sleep on a firm mattress. Maternity support garments, such as the Prenatal Cradle, can be very effective in relieving backache and pressure on the pelvis. Such a garment may be purchased at maternity shops or by mail. If you need more information, we have brochures. Also, the following exercise can be very helpful.

1. Start with your back against a wall.
2. Tighten your abdominal muscles and tuck in your buttocks so the small of your back is flat against the wall.
3. If you put your hands on your hipbones, you should feel your hips rock.

**ABDOMINAL OR GROIN PAINS-** crampy or short, stabbing pains on your sides, usually noticed on getting up, changing positions, coughing or sneezing. They may be brief or last a couple of hours.

REASONS- Uterine ligaments stretch and sometimes spasm. Most pregnant women will experience these some time in their pregnancy.

WHAT HELPS- As long as pain is occasional, not persistent, not accompanied by fever, chills, bleeding, faintness or other unusual symptoms, and does not regularly come and go, there is no cause for concern. Get off your feet and find a comfortable position to rest in. It also helps to lean into the affected side until it relaxes. If these measures do not relieve the pain, call us.

### **DENTAL PROBLEMS/BLEEDING GUMS**

REASONS- Increased hormone production causing swelling similar to that which takes place in nasal and vaginal mucous membranes. Sensitive gums may become inflamed and bleed. The drain of nutrients needed for placental and fetal growth can also affect teeth.

WHAT HELPS- Good preventative care. See your dentist at least once during pregnancy, even if you aren't having any problems. If you do suspect a problem, make an appointment right away. However, special precautions should be taken. To insure that oxygen to the fetus is not compromised, use only local anesthetics (without epinephrine). Obviously, be sure that your dentist and technician knows that you are pregnant before any procedures are done. Avoid x-rays unless absolutely necessary, and then take special precautions. Insure that only minimal areas are exposed. A lead apron should shield other areas, especially the uterus. Sometimes there's actually more risk to the fetus in putting off necessary dental work than there is in having it done. Badly decayed teeth that are not taken care of can be a source of infection that spreads throughout the system, putting both mother and baby in danger. Brush and floss teeth after every meal. A soft toothbrush may be helpful for bleeding gums.

### **HEMORRHOIDS AND VARICOSE VEINS**

REASONS- Hemorrhoids are varicose veins of the rectum and affect 20-50 percent of all pregnant women. Increased blood volume and pressure from the enlarging uterus contribute to varicose veins in the lower half of the body. Constipation often compounds the problem. Hemorrhoids can cause itching and bleeding.

WHAT HELPS- If you know you have hemorrhoids, there are several things you can do to alleviate the problem. Avoid constipation. This may prevent hemorrhoids completely. Sleep on your side to avoid putting extra pressure on the rectal veins. Do Kegal exercise (if you don't know how, ask us to

explain this important exercise) to improve circulation in the area. Take warm (not hot) baths twice a day with plain water. Keep the perineal and anal areas scrupulously clean. Wash with water after bowel movements, and always wipe from front to back. Lie down several times a day if possible. With good care, hemorrhoids should disappear after delivery. If you develop varicose veins in the legs, you should purchase maternity support hose. They should be available at maternity shops and in the maternity area at major department stores. Avoid standing for long periods. Resting with your legs elevated will improve discomfort associated with varicose veins.

### **DRY SKIN/STRETCH MARKS**

REASONS- Skin is stretching across enlarging abdomen.

WHAT HELPS- To keep abdominal skin from drying out, you can use Aveeno bath soaks. Lotions or creams probably won't be effective in preventing stretch marks, but they may make your skin feel better and less dry. Avoid excessive weight gain.

### **INCREASING FETAL ACTIVITY/FETAL HICCUPS**

REASONS- As the fetus grows, his/her activity is more noticeable. The baby also gets hiccups-some get hiccups several times a day and others never get them at all. The baby is swallowing fluid in the uterus, which sometimes results in hiccups.

WHAT HELPS- Be reassured that continued fetal activity is a positive indicator of well being. However, when you first begin noticing fetal movement, you may not notice it every day because the baby is so small. If, after regularly noticing fetal activity, the movement seems decreased or absent, call us. At about seven months you will be instructed about how to keep fetal kick counts and should call us if your baby does not meet the requirements you are given.

**OVERHEATING**- feeling too warm

REASONS- Your basal metabolic rate is up about 20% during pregnancy.

WHAT HELPS- Bathe often and dress in layers. Be sure to drink enough to make up for fluids lost in perspiration, particularly in warm weather.

### **LEG AND BACK PAIN/SCIATICA**

REASONS- Pressure of the enlarging uterus can extend to the sciatic nerve, causing lower back, buttock and leg pain.

WHAT HELPS- Rest and a warm heating pad or ice. You may take acetaminophen, but never take Advil or Ibuprofen in pregnancy.

### **INCREASED VAGINAL DISCHARGE**

REASONS- Increased estrogen in pregnancy causes increased production of vaginal mucous.

WHAT HELPS-Frequent change of underwear. Frequent cleansing of perineal area is important. Do not douche. You may use powder in limited amounts. If the discharge is bloody and/or associated with itching, burning, redness, or bad odor, call us. These symptoms may indicate infection, which is not only uncomfortable for you but may be harmful to your baby.

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