

Promoting a comfortable pregnancy



Region of Waterloo
PUBLIC HEALTH

Going to the bathroom a lot

- this happens because the growing baby is pushing on your bladder
- by the fourth month the pressure will be off the bladder as the baby moves out of your pelvis
- when the baby drops in the ninth month you will have to go to the bathroom more often again

HELPFUL HINTS

- limit how much you drink after supper so your sleep is not interrupted
- during the day drink at least six glasses (8 oz.) of fluid

Constipation

- a common problem in pregnancy
- due to increases in the hormone progesterone, the smooth muscles of the digestive system relax and food is moved through the digestive system more slowly
- pressure from the growing uterus and the use of iron supplements can slow the movement of food through the intestines. Slower passage of food allows the increased absorption of nutrients, but can result in constipation

HELPFUL HINTS

- select a wide variety of fibre-rich foods every day such as whole wheat bread, whole grain cereals, bran, beans, dried fruits and fresh vegetables and fruit
- drink lots of water (6–10 glasses/day)
- remain active. Walk every day and do your favourite exercises
- if constipation continues consult with your health care professional



Hemorrhoids

- these are swollen veins around the rectum that cause pressure and pain
- they are sometimes called “piles”
- hemorrhoids get worse if you are constipated

HELPFUL HINTS

- prevent constipation by eating high fibre foods and drinking plenty of liquids
- avoid straining to have a bowel movement
- soak in a tub of warm water if you do have hemorrhoids
- discuss medications with your doctor or midwife

Vaginal discharge

- it is normal to have a thick, whitish discharge during pregnancy

HELPFUL HINTS

- take a shower or bath every day so you feel fresh
- do not use any bubble bath, bath oils, gels or perfume in your bath. These can contribute to yeast infections
- do not use douches

Groin pain

- caused by the weight of the uterus stretching the ligaments which hold it in place

HELPFUL HINTS

- stand straight—poor posture can cause or aggravate this pain
- do not stand for long periods
- get up slowly, supporting your growing baby

Dizzy spells

- some women feel dizzy if they stand up too fast or have been standing still for a long time

HELPFUL HINTS

- change positions frequently
- get up slowly, especially after you have been lying down
- avoid skipping meals
- follow Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating
- lie down and put your legs up if you do feel dizzy
- lie on our side when you are resting
- exercise regularly
- if dizzy spells continue, discuss with your doctor or midwife

Stuffy nose

- caused by swelling in the lining of your nose
- sometimes your nose may bleed

HELPFUL HINTS

- avoid dry air in your bedroom—use a humidifier
- breathe in the steam in a hot shower
- saline drops in your nose may help



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For more information call:

Region of Waterloo Public Health
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Phone: 519-883-2006
TTY: 519-575-4608

www.regionofwaterloo.ca/ph

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Morning sickness

- nausea sometimes occurs early in pregnancy
- it can happen at any time of the day or night
- it usually goes away after the third month but can continue throughout pregnancy

HELPFUL HINTS

- eat something before getting out of bed (sandwich, crackers)
- eat dry food for breakfast
- eat 6–8 small meals per day
- eat high protein foods (eggs, cheese), throughout the day
- eat fruit or drink fruit juice throughout the day to prevent a drop in blood sugar (this makes nausea worse)
- drink fluids between meals instead of with meals
- limit fatty, spiced and fried foods
- limit your intake of caffeine
- if the nausea is really bad, talk to your health care provider



Tiredness

- many women feel more tired than usual during pregnancy, especially in the early months and the last few months of pregnancy. This is caused by hormone changes

HELPFUL HINTS

- sleep as much as you can
- pace your activities and rest during the day
- eat well-balanced meals
- exercise regularly
- rest before getting too tired

Breasts

- early in pregnancy you may notice a tingling sensation; your breasts may feel full and tender
- your nipples may stick out more
- after the fifth month, you may leak colostrum from your breasts (a white liquid rich in antibodies)

HELPFUL HINTS

- wear a supportive bra that fits properly (you may need to wear it to bed too)

Heartburn

- this is a burning feeling in your chest and throat
- it happens because the baby pushes on your stomach as it grows and food tends to come back up into your throat
- the muscle at the top of your stomach is looser, letting food come back up into your throat

HELPFUL HINTS

- eat slowly
- eat small meals several times a day rather than three big meals
- do not lie down right after you eat
- avoid fatty, fried or spicy foods
- drink 6–10 glasses of water every day
- drink liquids between meals rather than with them
- avoid coffee and cigarettes as they tend to make heartburn worse
- drink milk if you do get heartburn
- if the heartburn is really bad, talk to your health care provider



Backache

- the ligaments which support the spine soften during pregnancy
- as your abdomen gets bigger it puts stress on your lower back
- pelvic joints soften

HELPFUL HINTS

- exercise regularly to strengthen your back and relieve your backache
- join a prenatal fitness class
- wear shoes with low heels
- be very careful when you are lifting things—use good body mechanics
- correct your posture when walking, standing and sitting
- tilt your pelvis to relieve backache (imagine you are holding a penny between your buttocks)
- a hot compress, hot water bottle, hot bath, or ice can help relieve backache



Leg cramps

- leg cramps are common in pregnancy. They can be caused by the pressure of the uterus on the blood vessels that descend into the legs

HELPFUL HINTS

- do not point your toes while stretching
- do leg exercises to increase the circulation in your legs
- point your toes up toward your head if leg cramps do occur
- if you have a cramp, do not rub or tighten the muscle, this may make the cramp worse
- avoid wearing tight socks or knee-highs
- avoid standing for long periods

Varicose veins

- are blood vessels that have stretched causing the blood to pool. They are usually seen in your legs

HELPFUL HINTS

- remain active—walking and exercise can improve blood circulation
- wear loose clothing
- avoid wearing tight knee-highs, stockings and socks
- do calf stretching exercises (point and flex your feet)
- when resting, lie down rather than sit, and elevate your feet slightly
- avoid standing for long periods

Stretch marks

- are dark pink lines that may appear on your breasts, abdomen, buttocks or thighs
- they happen when the elastic fibers in your skin are stretched to their limit and break
- there is nothing you can do to prevent them
- after pregnancy the stretch marks may shrink and fade to fine silvery, white lines

Shortness of breath

- near the end of the pregnancy you may find you have difficulty breathing. This is because the baby is pushing up against your lungs

HELPFUL HINTS

- sleep on your left side
- prop your head up on two pillows when you go to bed
- slow down and relax
- wear roomy clothes
- take slow, deep breaths