



Comfort Measures and Over-the-Counter Medications During Pregnancy

This list includes suggestions for comfort measures and over-the-counter medications that are reasonable to use during pregnancy. Please read all directions printed on over-the-counter medications. For concerns about potential medication exposures in pregnancy, consider www.mothersbaby.org for reliable information.

Allergies

Consider avoiding outdoor activities during certain seasons, avoiding known allergens, wearing a face mask to prevent inhaling allergens, sinus rinses with a saline nose spray.

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Cetirizine hydrochloride (Zyrtec): 10 mg once a day, as needed
- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl): 25-50 mg every 6 hours, as needed
- Loratadine (Claritin): 10 mg once a day, as needed
- Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed): **Do not use if you have known high blood pressure; avoid use in the 1st trimester and prolonged use in the 3rd trimester.** 30-60mg every 6 hours, as needed

Back Pain

Massage, physical therapy, acupuncture and chiropractic adjustments are safe during pregnancy. See also "Sciatica" below.

- Ice first 24-72 hours, heat or ice thereafter
- Use proper body mechanics and posture
- Swimming, pregnancy yoga

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol): Regular strength 325 mg: Take 2 pills every 4-6 hours while

symptoms last. Do not take more than 10 pills in 24 hours. **OR** Extra strength 500 mg: Take 2 pills every 6 hours while symptoms last. Do not take more than 6 pills in 24 hours.

- **DO NOT USE:** Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), Full-strength Aspirin or Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn, Anaprox)

Cold Symptoms

A flu shot is recommended every year. If you have a fever of 100.4F or greater, please call our office.

- Increase your rest and fluid intake

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol): Regular strength 325 mg: Take 2 pills every 4-6 hours while symptoms last. Do not take more than 10 pills in 24 hours. **OR** Extra strength 500 mg: Take 2 pills every 6 hours while symptoms last. Do not take more than 6 pills in 24 hours.
- Throat lozenges (Cepacol): look for ingredients Menthol and/or Benzocaine (Screts) Read product directions for dosing
- Phenol throat spray (Chloraseptic): local anesthetic spray. Read product directions for dosing
- Cough medicines, syrup or cough drops containing Guaifenesin or Dextromethorphan (buy the formulation that treats your specific symptoms) Read product directions for dosing



- Phenylephrine (Sudafed-PE): **Do not use if you have known high blood pressure; Avoid use in 1st trimester.** 10mg every 4 hours, as needed. Do not exceed 60mg in 24 hours.
- Pseudoephedrine (Sudafed): **Do not use if you have known high blood pressure; avoid use in the 1st trimester and prolonged use in the 3rd trimester.** 30-60mg every 6 hours, as needed
- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl): 25-50 mg every 6 hours, as needed
- **DO NOT USE:** Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), Full-strength Aspirin or Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosen, Anaprox)

Constipation

- Increase fiber: high fiber foods, whole grains, fruits and vegetables
- Increase water intake and exercise.

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Fiber supplement, such as: Metamucil or Fiber Con (Psyllium) - read product directions for dosing
- Stool softeners: Colace (Docusate) - read product directions for dosing
- Milk of Magnesia (MOM) - read product directions for dosing
- Polyethylene Glycol (Miralax) - read product directions for dosing
- Glycerin suppositories - read product directions for dosing

Diarrhea

Call the office if you have fever or bloody diarrhea or a known inflammatory bowel condition such as Ulcerative Colitis or Crohn's Disease, or if you have lots of watery diarrhea for 24 hours and are becoming dehydrated. Most watery diarrhea will clear up.

Increase clear fluids and avoid milk or dairy products as these may increase gas and discomfort.

No specific diet has been shown to decrease how long or intense diarrhea and cramping may last but the so-called BRAT diet (Bananas, Rice, Applesauce, Toast) is popular. Avoid spicy, greasy, or fried foods as these may provoke more diarrhea.

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Imodium.
- Phazyme, simethicone (Mylanta Gas, Flatulex, Mylicon or Gas X) - Read product directions for dosing

Gas

Safe medication options include:

- Phazyme, simethicone (Mylanta Gas, Flatulex, Mylicon or Gas X) - Read product directions for dosing

Headache

Call the office if the headache is severe and not relieved by:

- Fluids to stay hydrated.
- Rest, relaxation, acupuncture and/or massage.
- Warm or cold compresses.

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol): Regular strength 325 mg: Take 2 pills every 4-6 hours while symptoms last. Do not take more than 10 pills in 24 hours. **OR** Extra strength 500 mg: Take 2 pills every 6 hours while symptoms last. Do not take more than 6 pills in 24 hours



- **DO NOT USE:** Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), Full-strength Aspirin or Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosen, Anaprox)

Heartburn

- Avoid spicy or fried foods.
- Eat smaller, more frequent meals
- Try not to lie down within two hours of eating.

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Liquid antacids: Mylanta, Mylicon, Riopan. Read product directions for dosing
- Calcium carbonate (Tums, Tums ultra, Maalox antacid caplets). Read product directions for daily limits
- Famotidine (Pepcid) Read product directions, formulations vary
- Cimetidine (Tagamet) Read product directions, formulations vary

In the 3rd trimester (after 26 wks), call if heartburn is severe and not improving after trying the measures above.

Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids are enlarged rectal varicose veins that can be itchy and painful. If these treatments are ineffective, consult your midwife or doctor.

- Try to avoid constipation; see “Constipation” for suggestions.
- “Sitz baths” (warm shallow bath) for 20 minutes twice a day may help; add Epsom salts, if desired.

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Hemorrhoidal creams or suppositories: Pramoxine HCL 1% (Anusol, Preparation H) Read product directions for dosing.
- Hemorrhoidal pads (Witch Hazel 50%), such as Tucks or Preparation H are particularly soothing when cold

Insomnia

- Avoid caffeine.
- Avoid using a smart phone in bed or other light producing, stimulating activities (TV, video games).
- Reduce fluid intake four hours before you go to sleep.
- Take a warm shower or bath, or relax with soft music, or massages.
- Any comfortable position for sleep is fine; you do not need to avoid sleeping on your back. Support your arms, knees and hips as needed.

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) 25-50 mg may nightly as needed.
- Doxylamine (Unisom) 25-50 mg nightly as needed.

Leg Cramps

This is a common problem and there is no treatment that is known to be more effective than another or more effective than doing nothing (living with it). You may consider:

- Wear comfortable shoes.
- Stretching, yoga. Flexing the muscle can help.
- Calcium, magnesium, or potassium supplements have not been shown to help but are safe.

Nasal Congestion

- Ocean (saline nasal) spray. Read product directions for dosing.
- Vaporizer/ steamy shower.

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl): 25-50 mg every 6 hours, as needed.



Nausea & Vomiting

Call the office if nausea persists so that you cannot keep ANY liquids or food down OR if nausea is new after 20 weeks of pregnancy.

- Try eating small frequent meals.
- Dry toast or crackers before getting out of bed in the morning.
- Drink liquids between meals rather than with meals.
- Crackers, dry toast, hard candy, plain popcorn or dry cereal.
- Avoid spicy and greasy foods.
- Sour and salty foods.
- Sea bands or acupressure.
- Ginger: ale, tea, capsules (350 mg three times a day as needed)

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Vitamin B6: 25 mg three times a day, as needed.
- Doxylamine (Unisom): 12.5 -25 mg every 6 hours up to 50 mg in 24 hours.

Rash

Mild skin irritation, dry skin or eczema is common.

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Pramoxine hydrochloride (Caladryl) cream or lotion. Read product directions for dosing.
- Diphenhydramine (Benadryl) cream or lotion. Read product directions for dosing.
- Oatmeal bath: Aveeno
- Epsom salts bath/ soak
- Topical Hydrocortisone ointment. Read product directions for dosing.

If you have a new rash, especially if it is over more than just hands, elbows or knees, contact the office for guidance.

“Sciatica”

Pain in the lower back or butt with pain also into the butt and back of thighs is often called by its old-fashioned name “sciatica.” This type of pain affects more than half of pregnant people and almost always goes away postpartum. X-rays or MRI of the back are rarely helpful and it is uncommon for people to get weakness or loss of sensation in the affected leg or foot. The pain is rarely caused by actual compression of the sciatic nerve but usually from changes in posture, weight, muscle groups and spine curvature during pregnancy.

- Wear low-heeled (but not flat) shoes with good arch support.
- Get help when lifting heavy objects.
- Place a board between the mattress and box spring if your bed is too soft.
- Squat down, bend knees and keep the back straight when lifting.
- Sit in chairs with good back support or use a small pillow to provide support.
- Apply heat, cold, or massage to the painful areas.
- If you must stand or sit for long periods, taking breaks and placing one foot on a low stool relieves pressure on the lower back.
- Rest.
- Exercise – A meta-analysis of 34 trials that included over 5100 pregnant people with back and pelvic pain showed that exercise may improve low back pain and improve function. Back exercises can strengthen the trunk muscles to stabilize the spine, strengthen the abdominal muscles and reduce the curvature of the low back (lordosis) that increases in pregnancy. Walking can lessen some of the tightness in hamstring tightness.
- Referral to physical therapy if heat, cold, massage, rest, and home exercise aren't helping.
- Complementary therapies like acupuncture or chiropractic treatment.

Safe medication options to try to ease symptoms include:

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol): Regular strength 325 mg: Take 2 pills every 4-6 hours while symptoms last. Do not take more than 10 pills in 24 hours. OR Extra strength 500 mg: Take 2 pills every 6 hours while symptoms last. Do not take more than 6 pills in 24 hours.
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Stretch Marks

Stretch marks occur in many pregnant people. They usually fade or go away after delivery. They may occur on your abdomen, breasts and thighs. Nothing prevents these but common skin creams, lotions, or oils may be soothing.

Swelling

Swelling of the ankles, feet and legs affects most people, usually later in pregnancy, usually affecting both sides (sometimes unevenly). You may wish to try:

- Elevating your legs or wearing support hose or compression stockings.
- Avoid prolonged standing or sitting in the same position.
- Avoid salty foods.

Please contact the office if you have sudden one-sided leg swelling and pain or redness.

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

Mild bladder pressure or urgency is common at different points during pregnancy. However, painful urgency or pressure or burning with urination, especially if you notice blood in your urine may be signs of a bladder infection. This needs to be evaluated and treated so please contact the office.

Vaginal Yeast Infections

Vaginitis can occur in pregnancy the same as for non-pregnant people. Month-by-month, many pregnant people notice increasing vaginal secretions and wetness. Yeast vaginitis and bacterial vaginitis can cause some of the same symptoms and studies show self-diagnosis of vaginitis is usually wrong. However, if you wish to try and treat what you feel certain is a yeast infection, you may consider:

- Clotrimazole 1% 7-day vaginal cream is the most effective in pregnancy. Read product directions for dosing
- Miconazole, either the 3- or 7-day vaginal treatment. Read product directions for dosing

If you are unsure of what is affecting you (this is common), please contact the office for guidance.

Varicose Veins

Varicose veins often occur in pregnancy (for the first time or old ones may get worse). They can affect the legs, thighs and vulva/labia, including the anus (anal varicose veins are hemorrhoids). You may try:

- Compression stockings.
- Avoid standing or sitting for prolonged periods of time

Please contact the office if you have sudden one-sided leg swelling and pain or redness.