



## Common Discomforts of Pregnancy

**Nausea:** With or without vomiting, usually gets better by 14 weeks gestation. No one is quite sure what causes it, but it is associated with positive pregnancy outcomes! Try eating small, frequent meals, try ginger ale or lemonade, hard candies. Seabands (for seasickness, available at sporting goods stores) may help. You can also try Vitamin B6, 25mg 3x every day or powdered ginger root capsules up to 3 times a day. If none of the above help, and you are vomiting daily, prescription medication is available.

**Backache:** Result of increasing size of breasts and uterus. Try wearing a supportive bra, stretch daily, exercise regularly, Tylenol and warmth to sore area as needed (heating pad or warm baths/shower).

**Vaginal Discharge:** Thick or thin, begins in first trimester (called leukorrhea). Usually no odor, not associated with vaginal itching or burning. This is an increase in white blood cell production to protect your uterus and baby against infection. Avoid douching or feminine hygiene sprays, and wear cotton underwear, pantyliners if needed. It's not concerning unless associated with itching, burning, bleeding or cramping. In third trimester may notice large amount of mucous (can be blood tinged), which may be your baby gel (aka the mucous plug).

**Heartburn:** Common in second and third trimester. Try eating small frequent meals, stay in an upright position for 30-60 minutes after meals to promote digestion and avoid acid reflux into esophagus. Drink milk after meals to reduce acidity in stomach. Tums and Maalox are okay, avoid Alka-seltzer and Pepto-Bismol. If it's severe, prescription medication is available.

**Constipation:** Common in second and third trimester. Try adequate fluid intake (8 glasses/day), prunes or prune juice, high fiber foods (like bran), exercise regularly, stool softeners daily (Docusate 100mg) or mild laxatives if needed (Milk of Magnesia). Caused by decreased intestinal mobility and pressure from your growing uterus.

**Leg Cramps:** Unsure of exact cause. Exercise regularly, calf stretches AM and PM, periodic leg elevation throughout the day, make sure your diet includes adequate magnesium, calcium, phosphorus and iron.

**Leg Swelling:** Caused by impaired circulation and increased pressure in lower extremities from your enlarged uterus. Avoid constrictive clothing, do elevate legs periodically throughout the day, and lay on your side. You can use a prenatal cradle and/or try compression stockings.

**Insomnia:** Common second and third trimesters. Try warm bath/shower before bed, decaf tea or warm milk, Tylenol or Tylenol PM, Benadryl or Unisom if needed, adequate support/comfort in bed can be helpful. Avoid watching TV in bed or having stimulating things in the bedroom.

**Round Ligament Pain:** Caused by ligaments suspending uterus in pelvis stretching as uterus grows to accommodate growing baby. Most common in second trimester. Can be one sided or on both sides. Usually there isn't much you can do to make it feel better... can try Tylenol, warmth, position change, prenatal cradle. Always call if severe, associated with bleeding or leaking of fluid or if it is cyclical in nature (happens every 5 minutes) or doesn't resolve within an hour.

**Shortness of Breath:** Common in third trimester, caused by increasing size of uterus pressing on diaphragm. Not worrisome unless associated with dizziness or palpitations. Can try stretching arms over head and keeping good posture. Sometimes occurs in the first trimester, though less often.

**Numbness/Tingling of Hands:** Caused by compression of medial and ulnar nerves/carpal tunnel syndrome from increased swelling and increased blood volume. Usually occurs at night, can try wrist splints while sleeping.

**Nasal Congestion:** Caused by increased blood volume. Allergy/cold medicine usually does not help. Can try saline nasal spray, steam, "breathe-right" strips if needed. This will go away after pregnancy.