



Frequently Asked Questions in Pregnancy

What can I take for a headache? Tylenol is safe to take for a headache, fever or any general discomfort. Follow the recommended dosage on the bottle.

What can I take for a cold? Sudafed or Actifed is safe to take for a decongestant. Robitussin is safe to take for a cough. Tylenol is safe to take for fever, aches, and pains. Sore throat lozenges are safe to take for a sore throat. You may use Airborne.

What can I do if I have been exposed to chicken pox? There is no danger to your baby if you have previously had chicken pox. If you are not sure, a blood test can be done to determine if you are immune. If you are not immune, please call your physician.

What do I do if I have been exposed to Fifth's Disease (Parvovirus B19)? It is likely that you have had the disease as a child and are therefore immune. If you are not sure, a blood test can be done to determine your immunity. It is not likely that you will contract the disease with casual contact. Good hand washing and hygiene are important to prevent infection. Please call your physician if you have been exposed. More information is available at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/revb/respiratory/B19&preg.htm

What should I do if I am exposed to Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease? HFMD is a common illness of infants and children and is characterized by fever, sores in the mouth, and a rash with blisters. It is caused by an enterovirus and does not harm a pregnant mother or the fetus. Good hygienic practices will prevent its spread.

How late in my pregnancy can I travel in an airplane? Please discuss with your doctor if you plan to travel during the third trimester, as some physicians do not allow travel after 28 weeks. You should never fly in an airplane after your 34th week of pregnancy. When traveling, it is important to drink plenty of water and to get up and walk about the cabin of the plane every hour. Please check with your insurance company to make sure you are covered outside the San Jose area should an emergency arise. Airport screening will not harm the baby.

Can I sleep on my back or abdomen? You may sleep on your back until the third trimester as long as you are comfortable. When your uterus is large enough to compress your major blood vessels causing hypotension (low blood pressure), you will become nauseous and dizzy. Placing a pillow under one hip should prevent these symptoms. You may sleep on either your left or right side. Sleeping on your abdomen does not harm the baby and can be continued as long as comfortable.

What can I do if I am constipated? Increase oral fluids, dietary fiber (fresh fruits and vegetables), and exercise (walking). You may try Citrucel, Benefiber, or Fibercon. Coffee and herbal teas can also have a laxative effect and alleviate constipation. Miralax is safe and effective. For severe constipation, Ducolax suppositories or Fleet's enema may be used.

I have a stressful job. Will stress hurt the baby? No.

When can I expect to feel the baby move? You can expect to begin to feel the baby move at about 20 to 22 weeks of pregnancy. You may not feel daily regular movements until 28 weeks of pregnancy.

Is it normal for my pelvis to ache? Early in pregnancy it is normal to feel cramping as the uterus grows and discomfort as the ligaments stretch. During the second trimester, it is normal to feel pains in the pelvis as the uterus grows, your skin stretches, and the baby moves around. During the third trimester, it is common to have a backache and sciatica. Sciatica causes shooting pains down the back of the leg and buttocks. Toward the end of the third trimester, ligaments in the hips and pelvis loosen causing discomfort. The baby may kick nerves on the inside of the uterus causing shooting pains toward your upper abdomen or vagina. Areas of numbness may also occur on your abdomen. If you are concerned about preterm labor, please call your physician.

Is spotting normal in the third trimester? It is common to have spotting or bleeding during the last month of pregnancy after vaginal exams or intercourse. This is caused by hormonal changes that cause the cervix to soften. It is also common to have slight bleeding in early labor. Call the office for heavy bleeding (like a period), prolonged bleeding, or bleeding associated with pain.

I have asthma (or allergies). Can I continue my regular medications? Yes, you need to be healthy for the baby to be healthy. Use of inhalers such as Ventolin, Asmacort, Proventil, Advair, Nasonex or Flonase will help to keep the breathing passages open. If you are on an antihistamine, Claritan, Benadryl, Dimetapp, Zyrtec and Tavist are the safest antihistamines.

You say I am 20 weeks pregnant. How many months is that? Obstetricians have standardized timing a pregnancy to 40 weeks so that it is easier to communicate and determine due dates as well as testing. The first day of your last menstrual period is used to calculate your due date. Twenty weeks is exactly half way through your pregnancy or about 4 1/2 months along.

My dentist needs to take X-rays. Is that okay? You should continue to care for your teeth in the normal manner. If X-rays are necessary, your dentist will shield the baby. Filling cavities or taking antibiotics if prescribed by your dentist is safe and desirable as pregnancy can increase dental disease and cause preterm labor. Ampicillin is the most commonly prescribed antibiotic and is safe during pregnancy. Lidocaine for pain relief can be used as necessary.

My feet are swollen Is that normal?

Mild swelling of the ankles and legs is related to the normal and necessary increase in body fluids during pregnancy. To ease the discomfort, elevate your legs or lie down when you can. Wear comfortable shoes and avoid elastic-top socks or stockings. Drink at least eight to ten ounce glasses of water each day. Support hose may help ease the discomfort.

Can I paint the baby's room? It is safe to paint with water-based paint while pregnant. Avoid solvents and oil based paints. Keep the room well ventilated.

Is it okay to have my hair colored, highlighted or permed? What about artificial nails? Can I get manicures or pedicures? What about spray tanning and tooth whitening? There is no information that any of these procedures will hurt your baby. Please weigh any benefits against any unknown potential risks.

Will it hurt the baby if I don't take prenatal vitamins? Taking prenatal vitamins with folic acid or folic acid alone during the first trimester may decrease the incidence of neural tube defects such as spina bifida. There is no data that taking vitamins after the first trimester benefit the baby.

I would like to take a hot bath. Is that okay? Studies show that hot saunas during the first trimester may cause miscarriage. There is no evidence that baths up to 100 degrees Fahrenheit cause any fetal harm.

I have a sinus infection. Can I take antibiotics? Yes, the only antibiotic that you should absolutely not take in pregnancy is tetracycline. Avoid sulfa and quinolone antibiotics in the third trimester if possible.

Will higher elevations and altitude be harmful to the baby? No, but if you have any difficulty breathing you should return to a lower elevation. Stay hydrated.

Is it okay to have sexual intercourse during pregnancy? There is no evidence that sex causes miscarriage or premature labor in low risk pregnancies. The baby is inside the uterus surrounded by amniotic fluid and the placenta. You may be sexually active until labor starts unless your physician instructs you otherwise. Lubricants such as Astroglide or KY jelly are not harmful. A small amount of spotting during the 24 hours following intercourse is common. Do not have any sexual activity if you have a placenta previa, preterm labor or your amniotic membrane have ruptured.

It feels as if my heart is racing. Is that normal? Yes, it is common to have palpitations. Notify your physician if you have fainting spells.

What can I use to relieve the discomfort of hemorrhoids? Use Anusol HC cream or Tucks medicated pads to relieve hemorrhoidal discomfort. Increase the fluids and fiber in your diet to decrease constipation.

I have varicose veins. Is there anything I can do to alleviate the discomfort and prevent them from getting worse? Avoid long periods of standing or sitting. When sitting elevate your legs above the level of your hips. Try wearing support panty hose throughout the day. Exercise, such as walking 20 to 30 minutes daily, is also helpful. If you are experiencing uncomfortable vulvar varicosities, wearing maternity exercise or bicycle shorts may help.

Should I get the flu shot? All women who will be pregnant during influenza season should be vaccinated, regardless of their stage of pregnancy. The vaccine should be thimerosal (mercury) free. The H1N1 vaccination is recommended for all pregnant women.

Is it safe to exercise? Yes. In an uncomplicated pregnancy, we recommend exercise as it makes labor easier, decreases the incidence of preterm labor as well as cesarean section. If an exercise causes cramping, shortness of breath, or pain, then decrease the intensity or stop exercising and discuss with your doctor. You should be able to carry on a conversation while you exercise. It is not necessary to keep your heart rate below 140. Contact sports such as soccer, ice hockey, skiing, horseback riding, and water skiing are strongly discouraged. Scuba diving is not safe at any time during pregnancy.

When do I have to stop running or riding my bike? You can run and ride your bike as long as you are comfortable doing so. Your ligaments will become softer and stretch after 28 weeks. If you have knee pain, you should discontinue running. Your balance will change during your third trimester, which may limit your ability to run or ride. Please use common sense and stop before it becomes a problem.

I drank wine, beer or alcohol before knowing I was pregnant. Will that harm my baby? The baby has different blood circulation very early in pregnancy. A small amount of alcohol before missing a period is very unlikely to hurt the baby. After you know that you are pregnant, you should avoid all alcohol.

I have a belly piercing. What should I do? Remove the ring before it starts to stretch. If you want to replace it during the pregnancy, see www.pregnancypiercing.com.

I just had an ultrasound and they gave me a different due date. Is my baby due at a different time? If the dates are off by greater than 2 weeks, then the due date may be changed. The ultrasound machine does not know when you got pregnant. It is giving an estimate based on the size of the baby. If you have a large baby, it may appear that you are further along in your pregnancy. Babies can be smaller than dates and still be healthy.

What can I do about leg cramps? Leg cramps are common during pregnancy, especially in the second and third trimester. The cause is unknown. Stay hydrated and try stretching more. There is some evidence that a magnesium supplement may help. Increasing your calcium or potassium intake may also help. When you get a cramp, straighten your leg, and gently flex your toes back toward your shins. Try stretching and muscle massage prior to going to sleep as well.

What changes can happen to my skin in pregnancy? It is common to have more acne during pregnancy. You may also develop a “mask” of pregnancy (darkening of the skin on your face) and a black line or linea nigra on the abdomen under the umbilicus. These changes are due to the increased hormones your body is producing. Other common changes are development of skin tags and more moles. Most of the changes resolve after the pregnancy. If you are concerned about abnormal growth of any moles, please see a dermatologist.