

PRENATAL

How Your Body Changes

As your pregnancy progresses, you may experience a wide variety of physical and emotional changes. However, please keep in mind that each pregnancy is different, and some may experience very few or none of these changes.

BACKACHE

- As your uterus grows larger, your belly will also start to grow, providing room for your child. This change can weaken your abdominal and back muscles, leading to lower back pain or discomfort.
- The enlarged uterus may also push on the sciatic nerve, causing back pain and/or weakness in your legs. This condition is known as sciatica and usually goes away after pregnancy.
- Helpful Tips:
 - Exercise to strengthen your back and abdominal muscles
 - A heating pad may help reduce pain; never use it on bare skin
 - Wear supportive shoes, no high heels
 - Belly band for support

BELLY (ROUND LIGAMENT) PAIN

- During the second half of the pregnancy, the ligaments supporting the uterus start to stretch or have spasms that lead to sharp or dull pain on one or both sides of your lower belly. This pain may feel like menstrual cramps.
- You may notice this pain when you're walking or if you roll over in bed too quickly.
- If the pain is severe and does not go away, call your healthcare provider.
- Helpful Tips:
 - Belly Band or support
 - Rest
 - Warm compress or heating pad on the area may help reduce pain; never use it on bare skin

BREAST CHANGES - TENDERNESS

- Tenderness, fullness, tingling, and darkening of the nipples are common and start early.
- The breasts will become larger and firmer. The areola becomes larger and darkens. The nipples may start to stick out more.
- Halfway through the pregnancy, your breasts may start to leak small amounts of fluid known as colostrum.
- Helpful Tips:
 - Wear a bra that fits properly and provides comfort and support.

CRAVINGS / PICA

- Cravings may be a sign that your diet is lacking in some essential nutrients.
- PICA is a medical term for craving items that are not nutritious – ice, starch, dirt, or clay.
- If you start having any of these non-food cravings, talk to your healthcare provider.
- Helpful Tips:
 - No matter what your craving, continue eating balanced/healthy foods. Eating well in pregnancy focuses on balancing nutrients and calories to maintain a healthy body weight and help your baby grow and develop.

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DIZZY SPELLS - LIGHTHEADEDNESS
• During the 6-8 week gestational period, hormones may cause blood vessels to relax, which leads to a decrease in blood pressure. • Standing for long periods of time, standing up too quickly, or skipping meals can make you feel faint. • Helpful Tips: ➤ Stand up and change positions slowly; avoid standing for long periods of time ➤ Stay hydrated ➤ Eat regularly, even small snacks every 2-3 hours ➤ Lie on your side when resting and sleeping
FATIGUE
• Profound tiredness is one of the earliest and most common symptoms. • Your body is building extra blood volume, and your metabolism and hormone levels are shifting rapidly. • Most women get noticeably more energy in the second trimester. • Helpful Tips: ➤ Earlier bedtimes ➤ Short naps ➤ Light activity like walking – even when you don't feel like it!
MOOD CHANGES
• Mood swings, tearfulness, and irritability are common and related to the rapid change in hormone levels. • When to call your provider ➤ Persistent sadness or hopelessness ➤ Anxiety that interferes with daily life ➤ Thoughts of harming yourself • Depression in pregnancy is common, but it is treatable. Please talk to your provider.
LEG CRAMPS
• Muscle cramps in your lower legs and feet can be normal. These cramps may occur at night and wake you up. • If you have frequent, painful leg cramps and notice any redness and swelling of your legs/feet, call your healthcare provider right away. • Helpful Tips: ➤ Drink a lot of water! ➤ Exercise or walk every day ➤ Eat foods high in magnesium ➤ Take magnesium supplements – Magnesium Glycinate 400mg at bedtime
SKIN CHANGES
• Raising hormone levels can cause some changes to your skin color. These changes usually go away or fade after the baby is born, and your hormone levels go back to normal. • Common skin changes may include blotchy brown marking on your face, a dark line down the middle of your belly, or acne.

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STUFFY NOSE - NOSEBLEEDS
- Nasal congestion is a common problem during pregnancy. This is due to the increased amount of blood in your body, causing the nasal passages to swell and feel very dry. This can then lead to potential nosebleeds. - Helpful Tips: ➤ Saline nose spray or a humidifier may help ease the dryness ➤ Increase oral hydration ➤ Discuss any Over-The-Counter medications, including nose sprays, with your provider
INCREASED URINATION
- Blood flow to the kidneys rises substantially in pregnancy, and the growing uterus presses on the bladder. Frequent urination is normal. - Don't try to control this by drinking less fluid! It is more important to stay hydrated. - When to call your provider: ➤ Burning with urination ➤ Urgency with pain ➤ Fever or back pain
LIGHT SPOTTING
- Approximately 1 in 4 women have some bleeding, or light spotting, in the first trimester. Especially common after intercourse or a pelvic exam. - However, always let your provider know about any bleeding. - When to go to the Emergency Room: ➤ Heavy vaginal bleeding (soaking a pad in one hour) or passing clots/tissue ➤ Severe or one-sided abdominal or pelvic pain ➤ Racing heart rate, severe dizziness, or fainting ➤ Fever over 100.4° F
VAGINAL DISCHARGE
- Hormones can create a clear or white vaginal discharge that may occur during pregnancy. - It is common to get yeast or other vaginal infections that require treatment during pregnancy. - Keep your vagina as free from irritation as possible. You can use lightweight unscented panty liners as needed instead of tampons. - When to contact your provider: ➤ Discharge that causes soreness or itching, and/or has a bad odor.