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## MINOR DISCOMFORTS AND THEIR REMEDIES

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**Abdominal Cramping** It is common in early pregnancy to feel cramping similar to menstrual cramps. You may also have a bloated sensation. Later on in your pregnancy, there may be lower pelvic/groin discomfort on either side. This is caused by the stretching of the round ligaments and muscles that support the enlarging uterus. A heating pad and rest can help.

**Backaches** Late in your pregnancy, the weight of your growing uterus causes changes in your posture which may cause backaches. Make a conscious effort to stand straight and tall. You should wear low-heeled shoes. Rest, a back massage, and heat will help.

**Constipation** Due to the hormones of pregnancy, your entire intestinal system slows down. This leads to both heartburn and constipation. Be sure to drink lots of water and eat food high in fiber. Metamucil, Colace, and Fiberall are safe to use in any trimester.

**Flu, Colds, and Common Illnesses** When flu and colds occur in pregnancy, get extra rest, drink plenty of fluids and take acetaminophen (Tylenol) for fever or discomfort. A vaporizer helps moisturize the air and eases a sore throat or nasal congestion. Early in pregnancy, it is best to avoid any unnecessary medication. Sudafed decongestant tablets or Robitussin DM may be used in moderation for relief of cough. If you have a fever of over 101 degrees or if your symptoms persist, please call us. If you have a medical condition, such as hypertension or diabetes, which existed before your pregnancy, call us before using any medication. Other common illnesses, such as sore throat or rash, can be treated by your primary care physician. If you or your physician have any questions concerning medications or treatment at your stage of pregnancy, please call us.

**Headaches** These are quite common in all stages of pregnancy. Rest, stress reduction and acetaminophen (Tylenol) help. Do not take products containing aspirin or ibuprofen.

**Heartburn** Due to slower digestion and regurgitation, you may experience a burning, acidic feeling in your mid-to-lower chest. Sitting upright and elevating your head off the bed with pillows provide relief. Mild antacids like Mylanta, Maalox and Tums, used in small quantities, also bring relief.

**Hemorrhoids** Hemorrhoids are dilated veins which protrude into or out of the rectum. You can experience itching or burning around the anus or have a spot of blood on the toilet tissues after moving your bowels. Having regular, soft bowel movements may reduce hemorrhoids. Anusol, 1% hydrocortisone cream, or Tucks pads may decrease the itching and burning.

of delivery. This loosening allows the pelvis to accommodate the passage of the baby during labor, but, in the meantime, may create pain. Rest and heat help.

**Leg Cramps** These tend to occur in mid-pregnancy for unknown reasons. Leg cramps also tend to occur at night, often waking you up. A simple exercise of flexing your toes vigorously towards your knees may relieve them. Maternity support hose can also help aching legs, but they must not be too tight. Balance periods of rest with exercise during the day. If a specific area of tenderness or redness develops, call us. Leg cramps are not usually caused by a calcium deficiency. Ask your doctor for further assistance.

**Morning Sickness** Nausea during the first trimester of pregnancy is common and is a result of your body's rapidly changing hormones. Frequent small snacks of crackers or toast may help. Try to always keep a little something in your stomach to keep the nausea at bay. And remember, this too shall pass.

**Nasal Congestion/Nose Bleeds** This can be bothersome and may make you think a cold is coming on. Usually, however, it is due to an increased blood supply in the nasal membrane. As a result, nosebleeds may occur. Try using ice and compression. If nosebleeds persist, call us.

**Pressure Under the Rib Cage** This can occur as the rib cage expands to accommodate the growing uterus. This pressure often feels like a sore spot or bruised area, especially under one rib. Sitting in a straight-backed chair with a pillow behind the lower back helps relieve the pressure and facilitates breathing. A warm bath or a heating pad may help.

**Shortness of Breath** This often occurs in the last few months of pregnancy and is most likely related to the normal hormonal changes of pregnancy. You may find that you need to take more time to do your usual activities. If this becomes excessive, you should notify your physician.

**Skin Changes; Dry Itchy Pigment Changes; Stretch Marks** To relieve dryness and reduce itchiness, use a moisturizer. Some women develop brownish discolorations on their face or skin or a brown line may occur in the middle of their abdomen. These are related to hormone changes and will, in most cases, fade after delivery. Whether you develop stretch marks on your breasts and abdomen is determined by your skin type, heredity and total weight gain during pregnancy. No creams will prevent them.

**Stretch Marks** Approximately 90% of women experience some form of stretch marks. They are caused by your skin's natural elastic tissue being insufficient to accommodate the stretching required in pregnancy. There is no way to prevent them. Vitamin E cream, aloe, and Keri lotion may all be used but these can only help with the itchiness that comes with stretch marks.

**Swollen Feet, Ankles and Hands** You can help relieve swelling by resting on your left side and elevating your feet several times a day. Remove rings which become too snug. Hands tend to be the most swollen in the morning. Some women develop numbness and tingling in their fingers.

**Vaginal Discharge** This increases for most women during pregnancy. It is usually a white, creamy discharge. You should maintain good hygiene. However, you should not douche during pregnancy. If persistent itching or irritation occurs, or if your discharge changes in any way, such as color, amount or odor, you should tell us.