

Minor Ailments in Early Pregnancy and Their Management

During pregnancy, hormones including oestrogen, progesterone and prolactin rise rapidly. It turns the womb into a suitable environment for the baby's growth. And at the same time, it could cause discomfort to the mother. Most of these changes are normal.

- Most of the minor ailments in pregnancy will spontaneously subside after delivery. Therefore, you do not need to worry too much.
- Herbs and medicines should be avoided especially during early pregnancy because they can enter the foetal circulation through placenta. Some medications exert toxic or teratogenic effect on the foetus. One should always seek doctor's advice before taking any medications.
- Some essential oils for aromatherapy may not be safe during pregnancy. Please consult healthcare professionals before using aromatherapy.

Nausea and Morning Sickness

- Nausea is very common in the early weeks of pregnancy. Adjusting your dietary habits may help to ease the discomfort.
- Some pregnancy complications and medical diseases like multiple pregnancy, molar pregnancy and thyrotoxicosis can lead to severe vomiting.



- Severe vomiting may result in dehydration and electrolyte imbalance. Please seek medical attention immediately when you have the following symptoms:
 - Cannot eat any food in 24 hours
 - Weight loss
 - Concentrated urine or no urine output in 8 hours
 - Severe discomfort, weakness, dizziness, confusion or fits
 - Bad tummy pain, fever, vomiting blood

Tips

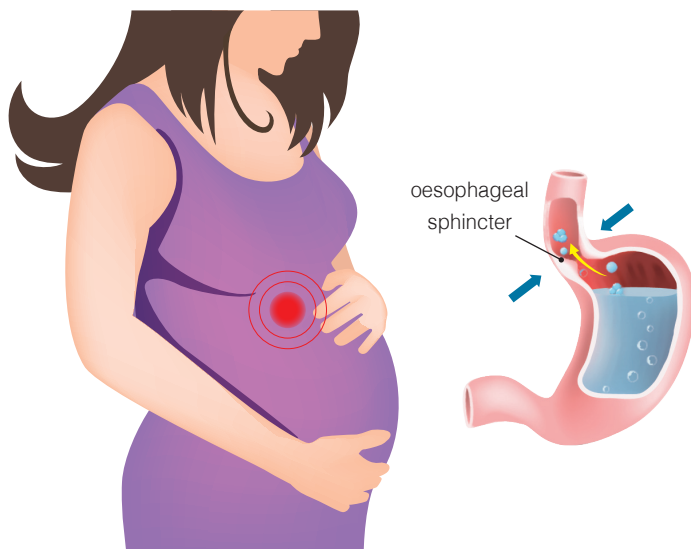
- If possible, eat some dry food like bread, biscuit, low-fat food, carbohydrate-rich food (e.g. rice, noodle, mashed potatoes) and try some sour drink (e.g. lemonade, plum juice). Avoid eating deep-fried or greasy food, garlic and other spices and avoid drinking coffee.
- If you feel sick first thing in the morning, give yourself time to get up slowly. Avoid brushing your teeth and tongue immediately after eating. Keep windows open for good ventilation. Get plenty of rest and sleep whenever you can. Feeling tired can make the sickness worse.
- Eat small amounts of food often rather than several large meals, say every 2-3 hours. Don't stop eating. Drink plenty of fluids in between meals to avoid stomach fullness.
- Quit smoking and ask family members to stop smoking as well.



Doctor may prescribe anti-emetic drugs if you have severe symptoms

Heartburn

- This is very common during pregnancy. The relaxation effect of progesterone on the oesophageal sphincter results in reflux of acidic fluid to the oesophagus, causing irritation and heartburns.
- Fatty diet worsens the condition because dietary fat lowers the oesophageal sphincter tone further.



Tips

- Eat small, low-fat meals frequently. Chew the food well and eat slowly.
- Avoid spicy food.
- Avoid lying down, bending and stooping after eating. Elevate the head of the bed. Wear loose-fitting clothing.
- Do not take any antacids without consulting a doctor.

Constipation

- This affects 10-40% of pregnant women. Progesterone lowers intestinal muscle tone and movement of colon. There is also an additive effect of increase in reabsorption of water from bowel mucosa.

Tips

- Drink at least 8-12 cups of fluid everyday in the form of water, milk, juice or soup. Warm or hot fluid is particularly helpful.
- Increase fibre intake by eating more whole grain breads and cereals, vegetables, fruits and legumes such as beans, split peas and lentils.
- Maintain an active lifestyle with regular exercise such as walking and swimming.
- Avoid all laxatives except those prescribed by doctors.



Frequent Urination

- This is the result of increase in blood flow to kidneys by 50% during pregnancy and the relaxation effect of progesterone on smooth muscle of the urinary tract.
- Besides, the urinary tract of the pregnant woman is more susceptible to infection. Urinary tract infection may lead to nephritis and preterm delivery if not treated properly. If you have frequent urination and pain while passing urine or you pass any blood, you should seek medical advice early.

Tips

- You should never restrict fluid intake because this may increase the chance of urinary tract infection.
- In case you have a urinary tract infection, you should take a course of antibiotics according to the doctor's instructions.
- If you have recurrent or persistent urinary tract infection, you should seek medical consultation early. This could be related to underlying anatomical problem of the urinary tract or kidneys.