

Travel in Pregnancy

If you decide to travel during pregnancy, you have to prepare and plan carefully. You may encounter disease or unexpected obstetric problems such as preterm delivery during travel. You may also experience other problems related to travel such as food safety, infectious disease or even traffic accidents.

You should consider the following questions before you make a decision to fly and travel.

1. Is your trip necessary?
2. Does your travel insurance cover pregnancy or pregnancy related complications?
3. Does your travel insurance cover the intensive care for a newborn baby in case of preterm delivery or other complications?
4. Have you discussed with your obstetrician about your concern or medical problems?
5. What will be your plan if any unexpected conditions during travel delay your original schedule to return home?



When to travel?

You may experience symptoms of vomiting or even threatened miscarriage in the first trimester. On the other hand, travelling in the third trimester can also be tiring and uncomfortable. Airlines will not allow you to travel in late pregnancy. Please check with your airline and insurance company before you fly.

Second trimester may be a better option for travelling. In general, your chance of going into labour is higher the further along you are in pregnancy.

Please be aware that you may not be able to access the appropriate management of preterm labour or other obstetric conditions during air travel or travel during pregnancy.

Avoid travel when you are waiting for laboratory results; otherwise you may miss the chance to receive management promptly.

What are the risks or problems during flying?

a. Deep Vein thrombosis (DVT)

DVT is a blood clot that forms in your leg or pelvis. It can be life threatening, especially if it goes to your lungs. There is a higher risk of developing DVT if you are pregnant and for up to six weeks after birth.

Pregnant women with higher risk of DVT

- Obesity
- Multiple pregnancy
- Inherited thrombophilic disorder
- Strong family history of DVT
- Medical condition which increases risk of DVT

b. Nasal congestion or problems with your ears

There is increased chance of having ear discomfort during flight. The changes in air pressure combined with blocked nose can cause you to experience discomfort in your ears.

c. Motion sickness

You may experience more motion sickness during air travel.

What are the Tips for air travel?

1. Try to get an aisle seat and take regular walks around the plane
2. Do in-seat exercises every 30 minutes
3. Wear loose and comfortable clothing and shoes
4. Drink plenty of water and cut down on drinks that contain alcohol or caffeine
5. Adjust your seatbelt so the strap lies below your bump
6. Wear graduated elastic compression stockings for any journey where the time seated is over 4 hours

Under what circumstances is flying not advised?

1. Increased risks of preterm labour
2. Severe anaemia
3. Recent vaginal bleeding
4. Recent abdominal surgeries or fracture
5. Serious health problems
6. Other conditions as advised by your doctors

Tips and consideration when you plan to travel

1. Choose the destination carefully
 - Avoid going to places with ongoing transmission of infectious disease (e.g. Zika virus, dengue fever)
 - Be aware of any medical facilities at your destination in case of any unexpected pregnancy-related or medical conditions
 - Discuss with your doctors for any need of vaccination or medication for the country you are travelling to

You can contact the “Travel Health Service, Department of Health” and visit their website for further information, <http://www.travelhealth.gov.hk/>

2. Beware of Vector-borne disease and food safety
(Please refer to P.16 and P.183 for details on “Vector-borne diseases” and “Food Safety and Personal Hygiene”)
3. Take with you
 - Medication you are taking
 - Pregnancy notes
 - Travel insurance documents

Is it safe to use hot springs in pregnancy?

Pregnant women are likely to feel warmer and faint due to hormonal changes during pregnancy. When you are in a hot spring or sauna, your body is unable to lose heat by sweating and your core temperature will rise. As more blood flows to your skin to help your body cool down and less blood flows to your brain, you could faint more often. It is therefore better to avoid using saunas, hot springs and steam rooms during pregnancy.