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Over the Counter Medications for Pregnancy

Listed below are some problems that can occur during pregnancy along with several simple "self helps" and commonly available over the counter medications, which are safe in pregnancy as well as medications which should be avoided. If your symptoms persist after these treatments, please discuss it with your provider at your next visit, or call for an appointment if you need to be seen sooner.

Colds: Drink a lot of fluids and rest.

Sore Throat: Sucrets or Chloraseptic or lozenges, Cepacol throat spray

Cough: Robitussin plain or DM. Cough drops

Pain or Fever: Tylenol or Extra Strength Tylenol (no aspirin or NSAIDS, such as Ibuprofen or Aleve).

Runny Nose: All over the counter antihistamines are safe during pregnancy. Sedating antihistamines (ie: Benadryl, Tylenol Cold, Tavist D, Comtrex) are needed for colds and severe attacks of seasonal allergies. Non-sedating antihistamines (Claritin, Allegra, Zyrtec) are good for PREVENTING seasonal allergies. Claritin and Zyrtec are available over the counter in name-brand and generic forms. (The generics are *loratadine* and *cetirizine*.)

Congestion: Steam, Ocean Nasal spray, Sudafed, Tavist D, Dimetapp, Vicks vapor rub, Mucinex. As a last resort: Afrin Nasal spray twice daily, NOT to exceed more than four days. **DO NOT** take decongestants (Sudafed*) if you have high blood pressure.

***Note:** Sudafed (pseudoephedrine) products are now "behind the counter" to limit the quantities purchased. These products are safe in pregnancy. Products containing "PE" in the title (i.e. Sudafed PE) do not contain pseudoephedrine, but rather phenylephrine, which is available "in front of the counter," however, are generally not effective for most people.

Indigestion: Eat smaller, more frequent meals. Keep body upright for approximately 30 minutes after eating. Elevate the head of your mattress by placing a rolled up blanket or "pool noodle" between the mattress and box springs. Try sleeping in a semi-reclined position, such as a recline-able chair.

Avoid: caffeine, chocolate, peppermint, fatty or spicy foods, and cigarettes.

Upset stomach: Mylanta, Maalox, Tums (liquid or chewable tablets), Zantac, Pepcid OTC.

Heartburn: Prilosec OTC, Zantac, Pepcid.

Gas: Mylicon, Gas-X, or Gaviscon chewable.

Nausea/Vomiting: Eat smaller, more frequent meals. Try hot tea, crackers, or the "BRATT" diet (bread, rice, applesauce, toast, tea). Encourage liquids, especially Sprite or 7-Up (let them go flat prior to drinking them), Gatorade, or PowerAde (may be tolerated best if diluted with water).

Avoid: fatty or spicy foods.

TRY: ginger root, Vitamin B-6 25 mg with Unisom 25 mg every 4 to 8 hours. Occasionally, nausea is due to heartburn. Try medications for indigestion (above).

Extreme Nausea/Vomiting: Call our office at (281) 364-1014 if extreme nausea or vomiting persists for more than 36 hours. You may need rehydration treatment.

Constipation: Increase fluids (6 to 8 glasses of water per day.) Eat high roughage foods (fresh fruit, vegetables, salads, bran, and oatmeal.) Include bananas or grape, prune, or apple juice in your diet.

TRY: Milk of Magnesia, Surfak, or Colace from one to three times daily for soft bowel movements. If desired, add Metamucil, Benefiber, or Fibercon one to three times daily for fiber and bulk.

Headaches: Headaches are common during pregnancy and are usually the result of inadequate fluid intake. Increase fluid intake, especially with electrolyte fluids such as Gatorade or Powerade. Try cold compresses to the eyes or the back of the neck. Try a caffeinated beverage, especially if you have cut back on caffeine.

Avoid: Advil, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Aleve, or aspirin.

TRY: Tylenol or Extra Strength Tylenol (acetaminophen).

Headaches in the third trimester may represent a serious complication in pregnancy. Please call our office at (281) 364-1014 if your headache persists after routine treatments or is more severe than normal.

Swelling: Decrease salt from diet (chips, processed meats such as luncheon meats or SPAM, pork, Mexican food, canned soup/vegetables, soda, and fast food.)

Decrease sugar intake.

Avoid high temperatures and prolonged standing or walking.

Elevate feet or rest on left side with feet elevated above heart level.

Backache: Pelvic tilt exercises, apply heat, rest, or massage therapy. Purchase a maternity support belt to be worn under your clothing.

TRY: Tylenol, Ben Gay, Icy Hot, muscle cream.

Heating pads are fine, but avoid use with Ben Gay or muscle cream, as it may burn your skin.

Hemorrhoids: Sit in a tub of warm water frequently. Prevent constipation (see above.)

TRY: Tucks medicated pads, Preparation H ointment.

Diarrhea: Encourage liquids, especially Sprite, Gatorade, or PowerAde (may be tolerated best if

diluted with water).

Avoid: dairy products

TRY: Kaopectate, Pepto Bismol, Immodium AD.

Ligament Pain: Experienced as sharp, intermittent pains in sides or groin areas. Worse with twisting, position changes, or after exertion. Do pelvic tilt exercise, sit with legs elevated, apply warm moist heat, or take a warm tub bath. Lie on left side and draw knees up to chest.

Avoid: sudden movements.

TRY: Tylenol or Extra Strength Tylenol, if needed.

Insomnia: Use pillows for support (between the knees, behind the back, under the belly). Try a hot bath for relaxation.

Practice good sleep hygiene: avoid caffeine, watching TV or reading in bed

TRY: Benadryl 25 mg, Tylenol PM, or Unisom. Try exercise before bed.

Leg Cramps: Alternate rest / activity. Try support hose, do dorsiflex exercises (stretching your toes toward your head to flex your foot).

Avoid: standing for long periods

Increase calcium intake: 3 to 4 glasses of milk daily, Oscal, Citacal, or Tums EX supplements 2 to 3 times daily.

Increase potassium: bananas or potassium salt substitutes (salt food to taste).

Pregnancy - When to seek professional help

There are a few symptoms that may indicate a serious problem. Please notify our office if any of the following should occur:

- Bleeding from the vagina that is as heavy as a menstrual period
- Severe abdominal pain unrelieved by rest or Tylenol.
- Chills or fever
- Protracted vomiting
- Elevated blood pressures (greater than 140/90)
- Severe headaches
- Visual symptoms: black spots in your vision
- Severe decrease in fetal movement
- A gush of fluid vaginally may indicate rupture or leaking of the "bag of water" (amniotic fluid)
- Rhythmic tightening of the abdomen with or without pain, rhythmic low back pain, or labor pains, if you are less than 36 weeks along in your pregnancy.

Prescription Medications During Pregnancy

The following medications are commonly prescribed during pregnancy and are generally considered safe. Please note that your specific history of allergies to medications may preclude taking one or more of these medications.

Antibiotics:

- penicillin derivatives i.e. Augmentin, amoxicillin / ampicillin
- azithromycin (Zithromax, Z-Pack)
- clindamycin
- cephalexin (Keflex)
- metronidazole (Flagyl)
- nitrofurantoin (Macrobid)

Nausea Meds:

- phenergan
- Zofran (ondansetron)
- metoclopramide (Reglan)

Pain Relievers:

- Tylenol (acetaminophen)
- Narcotics such as Tylenol 3, Vicodin, or Darvacet should not routinely be used, but may be appropriate under physician supervision.
- Imitrex (sumatriptan) – for treatment of migraine headache

Asthma Meds:

- Albuterol inhaler
- Steroid inhaler (i.e. Pulmacort)

Anti-hypertensives:

- labetalol
- Aldomet (methyldopa)
- nifedipine (Procardia XL)

Anti-depressants:

- Zoloft (sertraline)
- Prozac (fluoxetine)
- Lexapro (escitalopram)