

Nutrition Matters

Nutrition Services, Community and Health Services

Coping with pregnancy discomforts



During pregnancy, your body will go through many changes. As the pregnancy advances, you may experience some discomfort from these changes. This handout will talk about some of the most common discomforts: heartburn, nausea, vomiting, and constipation.

Be sure to consult your doctor before using antacids, laxatives or any other medications.

Heartburn

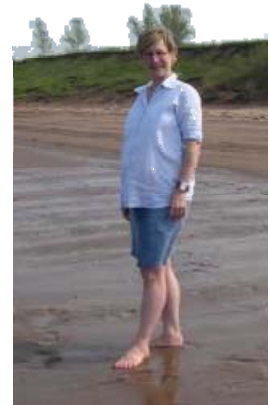
Heartburn may occur during pregnancy because of the growing uterus that presses on the stomach and hormonal changes that allow stomach acids to flow back up into the throat. These acids can cause a burning sensation in the chest. Heartburn is only a serious problem if it causes you to eat less.

Practical tips:

- Eat several small, low fat meals and snacks throughout the day
- Avoid spicy food, fried food, and drinks that contain caffeine (coffee, tea, or cola) if they bother you
- Avoid foods such as peppermint, chocolate, citrus juices, onions, garlic and tomato products if they bother you
- Eat slowly and chew food well
- Try to relax while eating
- Wear loose-fitting clothing
- Wait one to two hours after eating before lying down
- Before bedtime, avoid eating or drinking, except for water
- Drink fluids between meals rather than with meals
- Raise the head of your bed (or use pillows) so your upper body is slightly raised
- Use your knees when bending down instead of bending over at the waist
- Avoid smoking as it stimulates acid secretion. If you are trying to quit smoking, contact *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653

Nausea and/or vomiting

Many women feel sick from time to time during pregnancy, especially during the first few months, but sometimes throughout the whole pregnancy. The feeling is different for every woman. Although the exact cause is unknown, it may be due to hormonal changes. Diet and lifestyle changes may provide relief for some women. Occasionally, nausea and vomiting may require your doctor's help.



Practical tips:

- Eat small meals or snacks often (every two to three hours) to avoid an empty stomach. Do not skip meals or snacks. Feeling hungry may make your nausea worse
- Include protein at meals and snacks such as cheese, yogurt, milk, boiled eggs, canned fish, peanut butter, nuts, seeds or meat
- Eat foods that you like. The following foods may help to ease your stomach:
 - *Tart/Sour*: pickles, lemonade
 - *Earthy*: brown rice, mushroom soup
 - *Crunchy*: celery sticks, apples
 - *Bland*: mashed potatoes
 - *Salty*: crackers, pretzels
 - *Soft*: bread, noodles
 - *Sweet*: cake, sugary cereal
 - *Fruity*: juice, fruity popsicles
 - *Wet*: juice, seltzer, water
 - *Dry*: crackers
- Eat a few crackers or a piece of bread before getting up in the morning. Keep them by your bed
- Get out of bed slowly and avoid sudden movements
- Limit high fat and fried foods. Eat lower-fat meats, poultry, and fish and choose low-fat milk products
- Limit garlic or spicy foods
- Drink small amounts of fluids frequently during the day
- Drink fluids between meals rather than with meals to avoid feeling too full
- Keep well rested and avoid fatigue
- Wait a while after eating before brushing your teeth. Avoid brushing your tongue
- Avoid cigarette smoking and second-hand smoke

If smells bother you...

- Try cold food instead of hot
- When cooking, open the windows or turn on the stove fan to freshen the air
- Ask others to cook for you
- Sniff ginger or lemons

If you do vomit... rinse your mouth with water to protect your teeth from damaging acid.



Constipation

Constipation during pregnancy may be due to a number of physical and lifestyle changes including: the pressure of the growing baby against your bowels; hormone changes; not eating enough high-fibre foods; not drinking enough fluids; reduced physical activity; extra bed rest; and/or iron supplements.

Practical tips:

- Keep active by walking or swimming as an example. Be sure to check with your doctor first if you are not used to exercising
- Drink eight to twelve cups of fluid every day. Try water, milk, or juice. Warm or hot fluids may be more helpful
- Increase your fibre intake
 - Fibre is only in foods that come from plants (vegetables and fruit, grain products, beans, legumes and lentils)
 - Our body cannot digest fibre, so it passes right through us and makes it easier to have a bowel movement
 - Fluids help fibre do its job, so be sure to get enough fluids when increasing fibre
 - Increase fibre slowly to avoid causing gas, cramps or bloating

Tips to increase fibre

Vegetables and fruit

- Eat fruit instead of juice as there is very little fibre in juice
- Grate vegetables into soup, casseroles, pasta sauces, meatloaf, and meatballs or onto pizza
- Leave the skin on vegetables and fruits

- Add berries, dried fruit, or grated zucchini, carrots, apple or pear to muffins, pancake or waffle batter

Grain products

- Mix high fibre cereals with lower fibre cereals. Example include Bran Flakes™ with Corn Flakes™ or Cheerios™ with All-Bran Guardian™
- Add berries or sliced bananas to cereal
- Add natural bran to hot cereal, pancake, muffin or waffle mixes
- Stir natural bran into applesauce, yogurt, pasta sauce, casseroles or soup
- Replace the breadcrumbs in meat loaf, hamburger patties and meatballs with natural bran
- Replace half of the white flour in recipes with whole-wheat flour

Meat alternatives

- Try hummus as a dip for pita or vegetables or spread inside a sandwich
- Try split pea or lentil soup
- Add kidney beans, black beans or lentils to homemade or store-bought chilli, stews or soup
- Heat up a can of baked beans and serve with a slice of whole grain toast for dipping

Fibre content of some common foods

	A Source (2 to 4 grams)	High Source (4 to 6 grams)	Very High Source (6 grams or more)
Vegetables and Fruit	½ cup cooked broccoli, Brussels sprouts, mixed vegetables, parsnips, spinach, squash, or turnip greens 1 cup cooked eggplant 1 ear of corn 1 cup of green or red pepper 1 apple with skin, kiwi, nectarine or orange ¼ cup apricots ½ cup blackberries, blueberries, raspberries or strawberries ½ cup canned pears ½ cup cooked rhubarb 5 dried dates 1 cup prune juice ½ cup seedless raisins	1 artichoke 1 baked potato with skin ½ cup cooked sweet potato ½ cup green peas 1 mango 1 papaya 1 pear with skin 7 prunes	5 dried figs
Grain Products	½ cup granola with raisins ½ cup Harvest Crunch™ 1 cup Just Right™ ¾ cup Mini-Wheats™ ¾ cup oatmeal or oat bran 1 Shredded Wheat™ biscuit 2 Weetabix™ biscuits 1 cup brown rice, cooked 1 slice whole-wheat bread 1 cup whole-wheat pasta ½ whole-wheat pita (16" diameter)	¾ cup All-Bran Strawberry Bites™ ½ cup Fruit & Fibre™ 1 cup Kashi Go Lean™ ¾ cup Raisin Bran™ ¾ cup Shreddies™ 1 medium oat-bran muffin	½ cup All-Bran Buds™ ½ cup All-Bran Original™ 1 cup All-Bran Guardian™ ¾ cup Bran Flakes™ 1 cup Corn Bran™ ½ cup Fibre 1™ ½ cup Grape-Nuts™
Milk and Alternatives	1½ cups soy beverage	none	none
Meat and Alternatives	2 tbsp peanut butter ¼ cup nuts ½ cup split peas	none	1 cup cooked legumes (dried peas, beans, lentils) ½ cup pumpkin seeds

Source: Nutrient Value of Some Common Foods, Health Canada, 1999 and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research 2003.

By following these practical tips and eating based on Canada's Food Guide, you will be on your way to feeling better and getting the nutrients you and your baby need. If you are not sure how to follow any of the recommendations, speak to a registered dietitian.