



Natural Health Tips for Common Symptoms and Discomforts During Pregnancy.

Morning sickness, heartburn, indigestion, insomnia. These are not the things a woman thinks about when she finds out she is pregnant. But about 75% of women do have these symptoms and discomforts during pregnancy. Fortunately, there are safe, natural and effective treatments to relieve these common discomforts, allowing mother-to-be to focus on being a new mother!

Topics covered:

- Vitamins and Minerals recommended during pregnancy
- Preventing morning sickness
- Dealing with indigestion and heartburn
- Treating constipation
- Treating headaches
- Preventing nasal congestion
- Dealing with insomnia
- Relieving muscle pain
- Preventing colds and flu

During pregnancy, hormone levels change radically, causing the physical and emotional changes experienced by most women early in the first trimester of their pregnancy. Estrogen levels are about 70 times higher, and progesterone is about 10 times higher than pre-pregnancy levels.

Almost all pregnant women can benefit from nutritional and multivitamin supplementation before and during their pregnancy. A diet high in fat, salt and sugar can lack the essential vitamins and minerals needed during pregnancy. The best diet is one balanced in fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, beans and fish, with a limit on refined sugars, processed foods, and saturated fats.

Suggested Vitamins and Minerals

A good prenatal vitamin can provide the basic vitamins and minerals recommended before and during pregnancy. Also include foods that are high in vitamins and minerals.

Calcium

Needed to form baby's teeth, bone, and aids in muscle and heart function
Recommend 600-800mg/day of calcium citrate or malate. 1200-1600mg/ day of calcium carbonate.

1. [Click here for a list of foods high in calcium](#)



Magnesium

Needed to absorb calcium
Can help with nausea and vomiting
Recommend 300-500 mg/day

Food sources include almonds, barley, dried fruits, honey and potatoes. Herbal sources include alfalfa, dandelion, and seaweed.

Iron

Physician will check for iron deficiency. Iron is needed to build red blood cells in both mom and baby. Iron prevents anemia.

Foods high in iron include kelp, kombu, dulse, almonds, beets, egg yolks, honey. Herbal sources include alfalfa, dandelion, nettles and kelp.

Selenium

Needed for proper growth and development of baby. Deficiencies are associated with low birth weight babies and linked to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
Recommend 150-300 mcg/day

Food sources include wheat germ, oats, brown rice, brazil nuts.

Vitamin C

Excellent for immune support, helps to prevent high blood pressure during pregnancy
Recommend 1000mg/day

Food sources include red and green peppers, broccoli, and citrus fruits.

Folic Acid

Required for proper development of baby's nervous system. Deficiencies have been linked to low birth weight and nervous system defects. Taking folic acid before and during pregnancy will lead to a 38% lower risk of baby developing a congenital heart defect.

Recommend 800-1200mcg/day.

Food sources include green leafy vegetables, nuts, whole grains, watercress, parsley, and dandelion.



Vitamin B6

Helps to prevent nausea and vomiting, important for proper milk production.
Recommend 100mg/day

Food sources include whole grains, wheat germ, egg yolks, peas, carrots.

Vitamin B12

Important for red blood cell formation, and milk production
Vegans and vegetarians are often deficient in vitamin B12
Recommend 200-1000mcg/day depending on deficiency. Your physician can test your levels.

[Click here for a list of foods high in B12](#)

Vitamin D

A hormone important for calcium metabolism and immune support
Recommend up to 2000IU/day

Food sources include fish and fortified milk products.

Vitamin E

An antioxidant will decrease risk of developing high blood pressure during pregnancy.
Recommend 50-400 IU/day

Food sources include brown rice, parsley, and wheat germ. Herbal sources include alfalfa, dandelion, raspberry leaf, rosehips, seaweed.

Omega 3 EFA's

Includes fish oil and flax oil.
Avoid tuna, halibut, swordfish and shellfish due to high contaminant levels.

MORNING SICKNESS

The most common causes of morning sickness are:

- Hormonal shifts
- Poor nutrition
- Vitamin/Mineral deficiencies
- Low blood sugar

Morning sickness is often caused by the large hormonal shifts that occur during the first few weeks or months of pregnancy.



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Vitamin B6 can help to process the extra hormones, relieving nausea and vomiting. Start with vitamin B6 alone. After nausea relieved, combine with a B-complex as the B's work better when given together.

Recommendations for morning sickness:

- 25 - 50mg Vitamin B6 3x/day
- 100mg magnesium a day
- Ginger tea or 250mg ginger root powder in a capsule 3-4x/day. Avoid more than 2 grams ginger if you have a history of miscarriages
- Take a prenatal to prevent vitamin/mineral deficiencies. However, be aware that a prenatal may cause nausea.
- Avoid processed foods, fried foods and foods high in sugar.
- Moderate exercise helps
- Low blood sugar can cause nausea. Eat every 2-3 hours. Eat protein with every meal. Have a protein rich snack before going to bed. Dry crackers first thing in the morning can help.
- Peppermint tea can help.

Indigestion and Heartburn

During pregnancy, foods travel slowly through the digestive tract due to relaxation of the muscles in the esophagus, stomach and intestinal walls. This can lead to indigestion and heartburn. Here are some tips to alleviate these symptoms.

- Avoid caffeine (coffee, green tea, black tea)
- Avoid spicy foods and fatty/fried foods
- Digestive enzymes containing papaya enzymes can help
- Drink fennel tea or use slippery elm powder
- A combination of fennel, anise and cumin seeds can alleviate many intestinal problems
- A high quality probiotic with "friendly bacteria" (20-50 billion count)
- Avoid lying down after eating

Constipation

- Increase fiber in diet. Add flax or psyllium seeds.
- drink at least 8 glasses water/day
- Avoid laxatives such as senna and aloe. These can be harmful during pregnancy
- Simmer 3-5 prunes in 1 cup heated apple juice for 15 min. Drink the juice and eat the fruit.
- Probiotics will help ease constipation.
- Moderate exercise

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Headaches

Headaches can be due to several reasons when pregnant. Some of these reasons include sinus congestion, changes in circulation due to hormone changes, nutrient deficiencies, lack of sleep, and muscle tension due to the extra weight. Treating the individual causes can help to alleviate the headaches. Some suggestions include:

- Drink raspberry leaf tea to improve circulation and balance hormones
- 100mg/day Vitamin B6 to improve hormone balance
- Treat sinus congestion (see notes below)
- Take a high quality prenatal vitamin (however some women can develop nausea and headaches from B vitamins in a prenatal)
- Follow suggestions for insomnia (see below)
- Follow suggestions for muscle pain (see below)

Nasal Congestion

Many women experience nasal and sinus congestion. This could be due to hormone changes that result in swelling of the sinus mucosa. High Estrogen can also lead to increased mucus production.

Recommendations:

- Daily saline nasal rinses (kits can be purchased at your local pharmacy)
- Avoid dairy that can also increase mucus production. Make sure to get calcium from other foods and a supplement. [Click here for a list of calcium rich foods.](#)
- Get tested for food allergies. Vitalia Health Care offers comprehensive food sensitivity and food allergy testing. Remove food allergens.
- Get tested for environmental allergies. Vitalia Health Care offers comprehensive environmental allergy testing. Reduce environmental allergens.

Insomnia

Approximately 75% of pregnant women experience insomnia during their pregnancy. This could be due to hormone changes, excitement of the pregnancy, stress regarding the pregnancy, muscle/back pain, frequent urination to name a few.

Recommendations:

- DO NOT TAKE natural supplements such as melatonin, valerian, or kava kava. These are not safe during pregnancy.
- Avoid caffeine including chocolate
- Eat foods high in tryptophan such as potatoes, turkey, almonds, oatmeal, eggs, fish, honey and bananas.

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- Take your calcium/magnesium supplement at night to help you sleep
- Daily yoga is helpful to alleviate stress and muscle pain.
- A warm bath with 2-3 drops of lavender oil can help relax tight muscles and calm your nervous system.
- Homeopathic formulas such as 30C coffea or Neurexan by Heel can help. Contact your naturopathic doctor or homeopath for information.

Muscle Pain

Both drugs and natural supplements to alleviate muscle pain should be avoided. Instead focus on moderate daily exercise, yoga stretches, massage therapy, chiropractic care, and using a pillow to support your back and legs when you sleep. A warm bath with a few drops of lavender oil can do wonders for tight muscles.

Cold and Flu Prevention

Most herbs that support the immune system do not have enough research to show they are safe during pregnancy. If we don't know about safety, we do not use them! Here are some of my favorites for pregnant women. These work well and are safe to use.

- A good high quality probiotic will increase natural immunity for mother and baby
- Include garlic in food, but don't overdo it! Culinary use is fine as garlic in high doses can lead to heartburn.
- Vitamin C: 500-1000mg/day
- Vitamin D: 1000-2000IU/day
- Turmeric in cooking
- Many homeopathic immune supportive remedies are great during pregnancy. Consult your homeopathic or naturopathic doctor.

As with any preventative program, start with a good foundation. Get enough rest, continue a moderate exercise program, reduce stress, join a prenatal yoga class, eat organic food and avoid processed and sugary foods.

Please consult with your medical doctor or naturopathic doctor before starting any new program. Many herbs are not safe during pregnancy, or we just don't have enough information about safety. Always consult with your doctor before taking any herbal or nutritional supplement.