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Discomforts during Pregnancy

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Abstract

Symptoms of discomfort due to pregnancy vary from woman-to-woman. The following are some common discomforts. Each mother-to-be may experience symptoms differently or not at all. The discomforts are nausea and vomiting, fatigue, haemorrhoids, varicose veins, heart burn and indigestion, bleeding gums, pica, swelling and fluid retention, skin changes, stretch marks and yeast infections, bloody nose and congestion, constipation, dizziness, backache and headache. Timely management cures the discomforts and some emergencies needs hospitalization.

Keyword: Discomforts, Pregnancy, Symptoms.

Introduction

With the physiological changes occurring in the body, the woman also experiences certain discomforts during pregnancy. Symptoms of discomfort due to pregnancy vary from woman-to-woman. The following are some common discomforts. However, each mother-to-be may experience symptoms differently or not at all:

* Nausea and Vomiting:

About half of all pregnant women experience nausea and sometimes vomiting in the first trimester--also called morning sickness because symptoms are most severe in the morning. Some women may have nausea and vomiting throughout the pregnancy. Morning sickness may be due to the changes in hormone levels during pregnancy.

Morning sickness seems to be aggravated by stress, travelling, and certain foods, such as spicy or fatty foods. Eating small meals several times a

day may help lessen the symptoms. A diet high in protein and complex carbohydrates (such as whole wheat bread, pasta, bananas, and green, leafy vegetables) may also help reduce the severity of the nausea.

If vomiting is severe, causing a woman to lose fluids and weight, it may indicate a condition called hyper emesis gravidarum. Hyper emesis can lead to dehydration and may require hospitalization for intravenous fluids and nutrition. Call your physician or midwife if you are having constant or severe nausea and vomiting.

• Fatigue

As the body works overtime to provide a nourishing environment for the fetus, it is no wonder a pregnant woman often feels tired. In the first trimester, her blood volume and other fluids increase as her body adjusts to the pregnancy. Sometimes anemia is the

underlying cause of the fatigue. Anaemia is a reduction in the oxygen-carrying capability of red blood cells, and is usually due to low iron levels. A simple blood test performed at a prenatal visit will check for anaemia.

- **Haemorrhoids**

Because of increased pressure on the rectum and perineum, the increased blood volume, and the increased likelihood of becoming constipated as the pregnancy progresses, haemorrhoids are common in late pregnancy. Avoiding constipation and straining may help to prevent haemorrhoids. Always check with your physician or midwife before using any medication to treat this condition.

- **Varicose veins**

Varicose veins--swollen, purple veins--are common in the legs and around the vaginal opening during late pregnancy. In most cases, varicose veins are caused by the increased pressure on the legs and the pelvic veins, and by the increased blood volume.

- **Heartburn and indigestion**

Heartburn and indigestion, caused by pressure on the intestines and stomach (which, in turn, pushes stomach contents back up into the oesophagus), can be prevented or reduced by eating smaller meals throughout the day and by avoiding lying down shortly after eating.

- **Bleeding gums**

Gums may become more spongy as blood flow increases during pregnancy, causing them to bleed easily. A pregnant woman should continue to take care of her teeth and gums and go to the dentist for regular checkups. This symptom usually disappears after pregnancy.

- **Pica**

Pica is a rare craving to eat substances other than food, such as dirt, clay, or coal. The craving may indicate a nutritional deficiency.

- **Swelling / fluid retention**

Mild swelling is common during pregnancy but severe swelling that persists may indicate preeclampsia (abnormal condition marked by high blood pressure). Lying on the left side, elevating the legs, and wearing support hose and comfortable shoes may help to relieve the swelling. Be sure to notify your physician or midwife about sudden swelling, especially in the hands or face, or rapid weight gain.

- **Skinchanges**

Due to fluctuations in hormone levels, including hormones that stimulate pigmentation of the skin, brown, blotchy patches may occur on the face, forehead, and/or cheeks. This is often called the **mask of pregnancy**, or **chloasma**, and often disappears soon after delivery. Using sunscreen when outside can reduce the amount of darkening that occurs.

Pigmentation may also increase in the skin surrounding the nipples, called the areola. In addition, a dark line frequently appears down the middle of the abdomen. Freckles may darken, and moles may grow.

- **Stretchmarks**

Pinkish stretch marks may appear on the abdomen, breasts, thighs, or buttocks. Stretch marks are generally caused by a rapid increase in weight, and the marks usually fade after pregnancy.

- **Yeastinfections**

Due to hormone changes and increased vaginal discharge, also called leucorrhoea, a pregnant woman is more susceptible to yeast infections. Yeast infections are characterized by a thick, whitish discharge from the vagina and itching. Yeast infections are highly treatable. Always consult your physician or midwife before taking any medication for this condition.

- **Congested or bloody nose**

During pregnancy, the lining of the respiratory tract receives more blood, often

making it more congested. This congestion can also cause stuffiness in the nose or nosebleeds. In addition, small blood vessels in the nose are easily damaged due to the increased blood volume, causing nosebleeds.

- **Constipation**

Increased pressure from the pregnancy on the rectum and intestines can interfere with digestion and subsequent bowel movements. In addition, hormone changes may slow down the food being processed by the body. Increasing fluids, regular exercise, and increasing the fibre in your diet are some of the ways to prevent constipation. Always check with your physician or midwife before taking any medication for this condition.

- **Backache**

As a woman's weight increases, her balance changes, and her centre of gravity is pulled forward, straining her back. Pelvic joints that begin to loosen in preparation for childbirth also contribute to this back strain. Proper posture and proper lifting techniques throughout the pregnancy can help reduce the strain on the back.

- **Dizziness**

Dizziness during pregnancy is a common symptom, which may be caused by:

- Low blood pressure due to the uterus compressing major arteries
- Low blood sugar
- Low iron
- Quickly moving from a sitting position to a standing position
- Dehydration

To prevent injury from falling during episodes of dizziness, a pregnant woman should stand up slowly and hold on to the walls and other stable structures for support and balance.

- **Headaches**

Hormonal changes may be the cause of headaches during pregnancy, especially during the first trimester. Rest, proper nutrition, and adequate fluid intake may help

alleviate headache symptoms. Always consult your physician or midwife before taking any medication for this condition. If you have a severe headache or a headache that does not resolve, call your health care provider. It may be a sign of preeclampsia.

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