



# Common Discomforts *Of Pregnancy*

[www.gamidwife.com](http://www.gamidwife.com)



Volume One

## Metamorphosis

Pregnancy is a season of great change. The process of growing and birth a child is a normal part of our lifecycle, and yet sometimes we feel like we are walking around in someone else's body. Your center of gravity changes, your nutritional needs change, your need for rest increases, and your insides are rearranged. No wonder pregnancy can be a bit uncomfortable!

An important aspect of health is listening to your body. Some of these discomforts can be your body talking, telling you what you need. Make time every day to be mindful of this.

Herbal remedies have been suggested. This is a great time to learn these alternative healing methods! Start with premade herbal teas, visiting your local health food store or organic grocer. Then move to bulk purchases of herbs and try some tinctures! Healing yourself is powerful.

### How to use this guide

Learn to use natural remedies for minor discomforts. Challenge yourself to trust your body and the plants that can nourish you. Know when medication is necessary.

Know what warning signs to watch out for and when to call your midwife!



## Discomforts related to your changing body

### Back Pain

*Causes:* The weight of your growing baby and uterus, constipation, standing for long periods of time, urinary tract infections, overdoing it, soft ligaments due to hormonal changes, kidney infection

*General Recommendations:*

- Improve your posture by tucking your tailbone to avoid sway back
- Wear flat, comfortable shoes
- Walk or exercise every day to reduce emotional and physical tension. Yoga is an especially helpful practice. (Specifically try the Cat/Cow pose)
- Regular chiropractic adjustments can help as your pelvis adjusts to softer ligaments.
- Tension may be relieved by acupuncture treatments.

*Herbal Remedies:*

- Supporting the kidneys is a wise practice during pregnancy in general. Two of my favorite herbs can be taken as a tea: **Nettle** and **Dandelion Root**. Both of these are a great source of nutrition, help regulate blood sugar, and nettle can support the adrenal glands (a common cause of back pain if you are overdoing it). Drink up to 2 cups daily.

*First Aid:*

- Apply heat- take a bath (with Epsom Salt), use a heating pad or hot water bottle
- Essential Oil blends for pain include Clove, Wintergreen and other essential oils. St. John's Wart tincture will relieve muscle spasms; drink 15-25 drops in water every few hours. For severe pain, add 3-5 drops of Skullcap tincture. For added relaxation, add these tinctures to a cup of Lemonbalm Tea.
- If your back pain is caused by the strain of your growing uterus, try wearing a pregnancy support belt. Check out the "It's You Babe Prenatal Cradle" on Amazon.com
- Arnica is a homeopathic treatment that can be applied externally. Traumeel is a trusted brand.

*When to Call Your Midwife:*

- Chronic backache that is not relieved by any of the suggested methods
- Blood in urine

## Morning Sickness:

Of course the terminology is misleading: nausea and vomiting of pregnancy can be experienced any time of day! This can range from a mildly nauseated feeling to constant nausea and vomiting and usually subsides with the end of the first trimester.

*Causes:* Low blood sugar, strong smells, hormonal changes that slow digestion, displacement of the digestive organs in favor of a growing uterus, oily foods, vitamin/mineral deficiencies, lack of exercise, stress, constipation, overtaxed liver

### *General Recommendations:*

- Eat meals that are high in protein every 2 hours (grilled cheese sandwich, Greek yogurt, peanut butter crackers, hummus with pita chips, etc.)
- Eat a high protein snack before bed and keep a snack by your bedside to eat immediately upon awakening.
- Carry snacks with you everywhere you go
- Avoid strong smells and perfumes
- **Avoid processed foods** that tax the liver and are hard to digest. Feed your body fresh foods.
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### *Herbal Remedies:*

- **Dandelion Root** tea strengthens the stomach, improves appetites and supports the liver.
- **Ginger** as a tea or “candy”, also try real Gingerale! (Warning: excessive

use in early pregnancy may cause miscarriage)

- **Lemon Balm Tea**, lemon balm is part of the mint family. **Red Raspberry Leaf** is great for toning the uterus and calming stomach spasms.
- **Homeopathics (3-5 pellets every four hours):** Sepia, Nux vomica, ipecac
- **Milk Thistle Seed**, as a liver support, 12-15 grams daily in capsule form

### *First Aid:*

- Place a drop or two of peppermint oil on a tissue where you can smell it as needed.

### *When to Call Your Midwife:*

- Excessive vomiting that results in dehydration
- Complete inability to keep any food down
- Weight loss
- Rapid pulse



## Itchy Skin

Itchy skin is usually caused by all of the stretching that goes on during pregnancy to accommodate growing tummy and breasts.

Did you know that your skin is your body's largest vital organ? One of its primary functions is to get rid of toxins. Increased sweating and decreased elimination means that your skin is working a little harder right now.

Eliminate toxic bath and body products and enjoy a clean diet of unprocessed foods. These two things alone can really help your skin function well. To find out more about non toxic skin care visit [www.ewg.org/skindeep](http://www.ewg.org/skindeep)

### *General Recommendations:*

- Use mild 100% natural soap to cleanse your skin
- Exercise daily to help your circulation and bowel function
- Eat fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and beans. Eliminate processed foods.
- Drink plenty of water! About half a gallon per day is a good goal, increasing intake on hot days and also during the winter when heating systems can dry the skin out.
- Use natural moisturizers like unrefined shea butter or cocoa butter

### *Herbal Remedies:*

- **Dandelion root** is great for bowel health and **Burdock root** reduces dryness and irritation. Both can be taken as tea infusions.
- Nettle tea tones the skin and can be taken as a tea

### *Warning Signs:*

- Cholestasis is a condition that occurs in pregnancy when the liver is not functioning well. One of the ways your body communicates this to you is through extreme itchiness, especially on the palms of hands and soles of the feet. You also might notice that your urine is dark or stools may be grey. You should call your midwife if your itchiness becomes extreme.
- Open sores from scratching that are not healing should be reported to your midwife.

## Leg Cramps

Leg cramps and restless legs at night are a common pregnancy complaint. This is usually an indication that you need more minerals in your diet. A lack of calcium, magnesium, and iron causes the muscles to spasm. Exercise increases mineral absorption and light exercise can alleviate leg cramps.

### General Recommendations:

- Exercise daily- a brisk walk or yoga routine

- Eat potassium rich foods such as dark leafy greens, potatoes, squash, fish, mushrooms, bananas
- Drink plenty of water
- Get a massage

### Herbal Recommendations:

- Chamomile Tea
- Oatstraw Tea

### Warning Signs:

- Constant debilitating cramps
- Hot spots in the leg

## Sciatica

The sciatic nerve runs under your uterus to your legs. Pressure from your growing baby, constipation, or lack of exercise can cause severe pain to radiate into the legs.

### General Recommendations:

- Lie on the side opposite the pain to take weight off of the nerve
- Avoid standing for long periods of time
- Place a pillow between your legs when you sleep
- Practice pelvic tilts

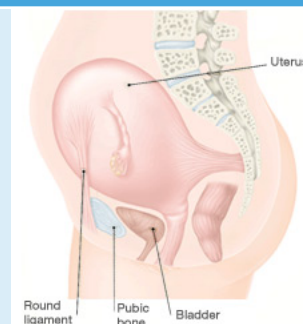
- Get regular chiropractic adjustments
- Apply heat or cold

### Herbal Remedies:

- St. John's word in water (5-20 drops)
- Arnica oil topically

### Report these Warning Signs:

- Loss of feeling or swelling of the legs
- Lower back/flank pain



## Round Ligament Pain

You roll over in bed in the middle of the night and are struck with a sharp pain in your lower abdomen. This is round ligament pain. The round ligament has the great big job of holding your uterus up!

Sudden movements can easily pull and strain this ligament.

### General Recommendations:

- Bend toward the point of the pain and breathe deeply.
- Massage the area
- Apply a hot water bottle
- Try a support girdle such as the "It's You Babe Prenatal Cradle" on Amazon.com

### Herbal Remedies:

- St. John's Wort tincture (5 to 20 drops in water)

### Warning Signs:

- Cramps that come rhythmically and grow in intensity over time should be reported to your midwife
- Bleeding or spotting should be reported to your midwife

Photo:  
pregnancy.familyeducation.com



## Swelling

Increased estrogen can cause impaired blood circulation and water retention. Your blood volume also expands during pregnancy, and this along with increased pressure on your lower extremities especially can lead to edema, or swelling.

### *General Recommendations:*

- Avoid being on your feet for long periods of time. Take breaks to elevate your feet.
- Ensure adequate intake of salt, protein, and water in your diet
- Compression hose may be helpful
- Exercise to help your circulation

### *Herbal Recommendations:*

- **Dandelion Root** and **Nettle** tea infusions will help the kidneys regulate body fluid

### *Warning Signs:*

- Persistent swelling
- Swelling accompanied by headache, blurred vision, or dizziness

## Varicosities

Varicosities are veins whose walls become prolapsed and dilated and form a snake-like appearance. This is caused by high levels of progesterone relaxing the smooth muscle in the walls of the vein. Varicosities usually form in the lower extremities and can also be found in the vagina.

### *General Recommendations:*

- Change positions frequently
- Elevate the legs above heart level for 15-20 minutes a day
- Prevent constipation
- Wear compression hose

### *Herbal Remedies:*

- **Nettle** Tea Infusion
- **Hawthorne Berry** Extract (1/4 t 2-3 times daily)
- **Witch Hazel Bark** infusion, steep 1 ounce in 1 pint of boiling water; put this on cloths to apply to varicose veins
- Apply Helichrysum essential oil, diluted in a carrier oil

### *Warning Signs:*

- Veins that become open sores
- Hot, tender spots in extremities



## Fatigue

The growing amount of progesterone (a hormone) in your body can be a major factor in fatigue, but also don't forget that you are growing an entire human being!

### *General Recommendations:*

- Take naps and head to bed on time
- Take walks and exercise along with mindfulness exercises.
- Ask for help when you need it
- Eat regularly, with enough protein and complex carbs.
- Take Alfalfa tablets, starting with 6 a day, increasing to 18 a day by your 38<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy
- Make sure you are getting enough iron

### *Warning Signs:*

- Depression
- Inability to function

## Constipation

When there is difficulty emptying the bowels This can cause feces to harden and become even more difficult to pass.

Constipation is commonly caused in about 40% of pregnant women by the effect of progesterone on smooth muscles, moving food more slowly through the digestive system. It is also caused by the displacement of the intestines by the growing uterus. Constipation can also be caused by dehydration as maternal need for water increases and may not be met with adequate fluid intake.

### General Recommendations:

- Increase fluid intake
- Get enough fiber in your diet
- Exercise regularly
- Hot tea in the morning can initiate movement of the bowels

### Herbal Remedies:

- Psyllium seed can be added to oatmeal or taken in capsules (5-10 gm daily) (Also a main ingredient of Metamucil: 1 tsp in 8 oz fluid 1-3 x daily)
- Senna, short term: 17.2 mg daily
- Yellow Dock Root as a tea
- Slippery elm powder can be added to foods

### Warning Signs:

- Constipation that is not relieved with any of the recommended remedies or constipation that occurs with severe abdominal pain or presence of blood in stool.
- Constipation pain that leads to signs of prelabor (contractions, lower back ache, loss of mucus plug)
- Fever or abdominal rigidity

## Heartburn

Your growing uterus is displacing your stomach and causing it to tilt in a different direction. Progesterone is softening the valves that keep stomach acid from flowing into the esophagus, and digestion is slowed so that food sits in your digestive system longer. All of this together can equal a bad case of indigestion or heartburn, characterized by a burning in the throat and sometimes vomiting.

### General Recommendations:

- Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day. Do not drink fluids with your meals and avoid a large meal at dinner before bed.
- A walk after dinner can provide time for your food to digest before lying down. You may need to lay propped up on pillows.
- Avoid spicy, greasy food

### Herbal Remedies:

- **Dandelion** Tincture, 20 drops, four times a day
- **Slippery Elm Bark**, 1 teaspoon added to warm milk; add a teaspoon of honey and a pinch of cinnamon

### Warning Signs to Report:

- Severe vomiting of stomach acid



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## Hemorrhoids

Hemorrhoids are swollen varicose veins in the rectum. They can appear as grape-like clusters or tag-like masses around the anus and cause discomfort and itching. Strain in bowel movements caused by constipation and the strain of pushing during labor can cause hemorrhoids.

### *General Recommendations:*

- Change positions often
- Exercise to increase circulation
- Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fiber
- Try not to strain with bowel movements, but rather relax and let them pass on their own
- Drink plenty of water
- Wear breathable, cotton underwear
- Take warm baths with baking soda and Epsom salts

### *Herbal Remedies:*

- Soak cotton balls in witch hazel and store in freezer for cooling relief
- Many companies have prepared herbal salves for hemorrhoids, follow manufacturer instructions

### *Warning Signs:*

- Rectal bleeding
- Back pain, severe hemorrhoid pain
- Emotional distress
- Inability to have a bowel movement

## Insomnia

Hormonal changes, physical discomfort, and emotional challenges can make sleeping difficult. On top of that, you are up all night going to the bathroom! A very common cause of insomnia during pregnancy is actually hunger.

### *General Recommendations:*

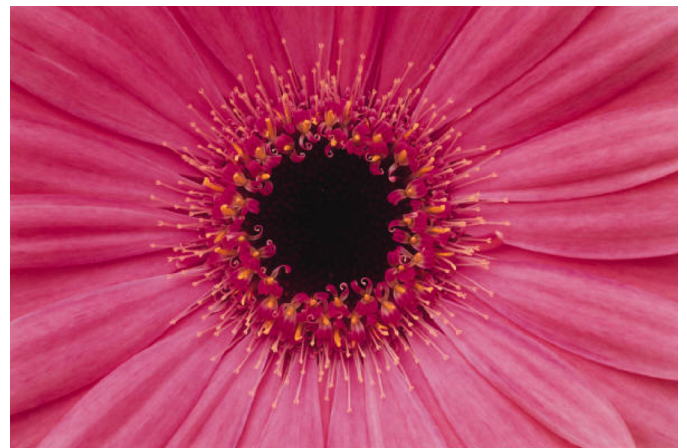
- Exercise daily
- Make sure to get 1 hour to yourself each day to take time to address your fears, take care of yourself, pray, meditate, etc.
- Avoid caffeine and sugar before bed
- Keep a high protein snack by the bed in case you are waking from hunger

### *Herbal Remedies:*

- **Skullcap Tincture**, ½ dropperful, directly under the tongue
- **Chamomile** and **Catnip** Tea
- **Hops** tincture (1/2 dropperful) under tongue in third trimester only
- Diffuse **Lavender** essential oil

### *Warning Signs to Report:*

- Inability to sleep due to intense physical discomfort or severe mental anxiety





## Discomforts that can occur at any time.

### Cold and Flu

Pregnancy is an especially challenging time to be sick because you can't take many of the over-the-counter remedies you may have relied on in the past. As long as you are able to stay hydrated and nourished, these minor illnesses are no threat to you or your growing baby.

#### *General Recommendations:*

- At the first sign of illness excuse yourself from any activity and rest immediately.
- Feed yourself bone broths and nourishing foods
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Vitamin C, 250 mg every 2 hours

#### *Herbal Remedies:*

- **Echinacea Root** tincture is great for both viral and bacterial infections. Take 1 drop of tincture per 4 pounds of body weight every four hours. For acute illness, double the dose or take it twice as often.
- For Flu: **oscillococcinum** homeopathic tablets
- **Colloidal Silver** throat spray, nasal spray, or dropperful under the tongue for thirty seconds

#### *First Aid:*

- Garlic Lemonade: Steep 4-6 cloves of raw garlic in 1 quart boiling water for 30 minutes. Add the juice of 1 or 2 lemons and honey to taste. Sip warm

- Diffuse Thieves essential oil. Also dilute the oil in a carrier oil and massage onto neck and behind ear, on chest for coughs, and the soles of feet.

#### *When To Call Your Midwife:*

- Fever over 103\* or prolonged fever
- Violent vomiting, diarrhea, persistent cough

### Headache

The most common cause of headaches is stress, tension, low blood sugar, constipation, dehydration, too little protein in the diet, and inadequate calcium and iron.

#### *General Recommendations:*

- Get plenty of rest and drink plenty of water
- Prevent headaches by eating plenty of protein.

#### *Herbal Remedies:*

- Calcium is needed for healthy nerve function. These herbs can be taken as a tea and are good sources of calcium: **Chamomile, Lemon Balm, Catnip, Oatstraw, Passion Flower, Skullcap**. Try a combination of two or three, add milk or honey to taste.
- Calcium Lactate tablets, 2

# Pregnancy Nourishment Tea

I prefer that all of my clients drink 1-2 cups of this tea daily. You will find that it prevents many of the common discomforts. Pregnancy Tea bags can be purchased; popular brands are Traditional Medicinals and Yogi tea

Bulk herbs can be purchased and custom blended to meet your specific nutritional needs. A good basic pregnancy tea recipe:

- 2 parts Red Raspberry Leaf
- 2 parts Nettle
- 1 part Oatstraw
- ½ part Alfalfa
- ½ part Dandelion Root
- ¼ part Spearmint

There are a couple of different ways to prepare this. Mix the bulk herbs up in a large bag and store in a dark, cool place, taking out how much you need at each preparation. Prepare by the cup, or prepare a half gallon at a time to store in the fridge.

The most effective way is to prepare a large pitcher full, pouring boiling water over the herbs and allowing them to infuse overnight. Strain out in the morning, store in the fridge, and enjoy sweetened with honey.



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