

Commonly Asked Questions in Pregnancy

WHAT CAN I TAKE FOR A HEADACHE? Tylenol is safe to take for a headache, fever or any general discomfort. Follow the recommended dosage on the bottle.

WHAT CAN I TAKE FOR A COLD?

Sudafed or Actifed is safe to take for a decongestant. Robitussin is safe to take for a cough. Tylenol is safe to take for fever, aches, and pains. Sore throat lozenges are safe to take for a sore throat. You may use Airborne.

WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO CHICKEN POX?

There is no danger to your baby if you have had the chicken pox. If you are not sure, a blood test can be done to determine if you are immune. If you are not immune, please call your physician.

WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO FIFTH'S DISEASE (PARVOVIRUS B19)?

It is likely that you have had the disease as a child and are therefore immune. If you are not sure, a blood test can be done to determine if you are immune. It is not likely that you will contract the disease with casual contact. Good hand washing and hygiene are important to prevent infection. Please call your physician if you have been exposed. More information is available at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/parvovirus/B19&preg.htm

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM EXPOSED TO HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH

DISEASE? HFMD is a common illness of infants and children and is characterized by fever, sores in the mouth, and a rash with blisters. It is caused by an enterovirus and does not harm a pregnant mother or the fetus. Good hygienic practices will prevent its spread.

MAY I FLY IN AN AIRPLANE?

Please discuss with your doctor if you plan to travel during the third trimester. You should never fly in an airplane after your 35th week of pregnancy. When traveling, it is important to drink plenty of water and to get up and walk about the cabin of the plane every hour. Please check with your insurance company to make sure you are covered outside the San Jose area should an emergency arise. The airport screening will not harm the baby.

CAN I SLEEP ON MY BACK OR ABDOMEN?

You may sleep on your back until the third trimester as long as you are comfortable. When your uterus is large enough to compress your major blood vessels causing hypotension (low blood pressure), you will become nauseous and dizzy. Placing a pillow under one hip should prevent these symptoms. You may sleep on either your left or right side. Sleeping on your abdomen does not harm the baby and can be continued as long as comfortable.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I AM CONSTIPATED?

Increase oral fluids, dietary fiber (fresh fruits and vegetables), and exercise (walking). You may try Citrucel, Metamucil, or Fibercon. Coffee and herbal teas can also have a laxative effect and alleviate constipation. In an emergency, Ducolax suppositories or Fleet's enema may be used.

WHEN CAN I EXPECT TO FEEL THE BABY MOVE?

You can expect to begin to feel the baby move at about 20 to 22 weeks of pregnancy. You may not feel daily regular movements until 28 weeks of pregnancy.

IS IT NORMAL TO HAVE ACHES AND PAINS IN THE PELVIS?

Early in pregnancy it is normal to feel cramping as the uterus grows and discomfort as the ligaments stretch. During the second trimester, it is normal to feel pains in the pelvis as the uterus grows, your skin stretches, and the baby moves around. During the third trimester, it is common to have a backache and sciatica. Sciatica causes shooting pains down the back of the leg and buttocks. Toward the end of the third trimester, ligaments in the hips and pelvis loosen causing discomfort. The baby may kick nerves on the inside of the uterus causing shooting pains toward your upper abdomen or vagina. Areas of numbness may also occur on your abdomen. If you are concerned about preterm labor, please call your physician.

IS SPOTTING NORMAL IN THE THIRD TRIMESTER?

It is common to have spotting or bleeding during the last month of pregnancy after vaginal exams or intercourse. This is caused by hormonal changes that cause the cervix to soften. It is also common to have slight bleeding in early labor. Call the office for heavy bleeding (like a period), prolonged bleeding, bleeding associated with pain or decreased fetal movement.

I HAVE ASTHMA (OR ALLERGIES). CAN I CONTINUE MY REGULAR MEDICATIONS?

Yes. You need to be healthy for the baby to be healthy. Use of inhalers such as Ventolin, Asmacort, Proventil, Advair or Flonase will help to keep the breathing passages open. If you are on an antihistamine, Claritan, Chlor-Trimeton, Benadryl, Dimetapp, Zyrtec and Tavist are the safest antihistamines.

YOU SAY I AM 20 WEEKS PREGNANT. HOW MANY MONTHS IS THAT?

Obstetricians have standardized timing a pregnancy to 40 weeks so that it is easier to communicate and determine due dates as well as testing. The first day of your last menstrual period is used to calculate your due date. 20 weeks is exactly half way through your pregnancy or about 4 1/2 months along.

MY DENTIST NEEDS TO TAKE X-RAYS. IS THIS OKAY?

You should continue to care for your teeth in the normal manner. If X-rays are necessary, your dentist will shield the baby. Filling cavities or taking antibiotics if prescribed by your dentist is safe and desirable as pregnancy can increase dental disease. Ampicillin is the most common antibiotic and is safe during pregnancy. Lidocaine can be used as necessary.

MY FEET ARE SWOLLEN. IS THIS NORMAL?

Mild swelling of the ankles and legs is related to the normal and necessary increase in body fluids during pregnancy. To ease the discomfort, elevate your legs or lie down when you can, wear comfortable shoes, and avoid elastic-top socks or stockings. Drinking at least 8 to 10 eight to ounces glasses of water a day will help to avoid excess water retention. Support hose may also help to ease the discomfort.

IS IT OKAY TO HAVE MY HAIR COLORED, HIGHLIGHTED, OR PERMED? WHAT ABOUT ARTIFICIAL NAILS? CAN I GET MANICURES OR PEDICURES?

There is no information that any of these procedures will hurt your baby. Please weigh any benefits against any unknown potential risks.

CAN I USE A TOOTH WHITENER OR SUNLESS TANNING LOTION?

There is no evidence that shows any harm using either of the products.

WILL IT HURT THE BABY IF I DON'T TAKE MY PRENATAL VITAMINS?

Taking prenatal vitamins with folic acid or folic acid alone during the first trimester may decrease the

incidence of neural tube defects like spina bifida. There is no data that after the first trimester prenatal vitamins are essential.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A HOT BATH. IS THIS OKAY?

Studies show that hot saunas during the first trimester may cause miscarriage. There is no evidence that hot baths cause any fetal harm.

I HAVE A SINUS INFECTION. CAN I TAKE ANTIBIOTICS?

Yes. The only antibiotic that you should absolutely not take in pregnancy is tetracycline. Avoid sulfa and quinolone antibiotics in the third trimester.

WILL HIGHER ELEVATIONS AND ALTITUDE BE HARMFUL TO THE BABY?

No, but if you have any difficulty breathing you should return to a lower elevation.

IS IT OKAY TO HAVE SEXUAL INTERCOURSE DURING PREGNANCY?

There is no evidence that sex causes miscarriage or premature labor in low risk pregnancies. You may be sexually active until labor starts unless your physician instructs you otherwise. If your pregnancy is complicated, discuss this with your doctor. Lubricants such as Astroglide or KY jelly are not harmful. A small amount of spotting during the 24 hours after intercourse is common.

IT FEELS AS IF MY HEART IS RACING. IS THIS NORMAL?

Yes, it is common to have palpitations. Notify your physician if you have fainting spells.

WHAT CAN I USE TO RELIEVE THE DISCOMFORT OF HEMORRHOIDS?

Use Anusol HC cream or Tucks medicated pads to relieve hemorrhoidal discomfort. Increase the fluids and fiber in your diet to decrease constipation.

CAN I PAINT THE BABY'S ROOM?

It is safe to paint with water based paint while pregnant. Avoid solvents and oil based paints. Keep the room well ventilated.

I HAVE VARICOSE VEINS. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO ALLEVIATE THE DISCOMFORT AND PREVENT THEM FROM GETTING WORSE?

Avoid long periods of standing or sitting. When sitting elevate your legs above the level of your hips. Try wearing support panty hose throughout the day. Exercise, such as walking 20 to 30 minutes daily, is also helpful. If you are experiencing uncomfortable vulvar varicosities, wearing maternity exercise or bicycle shorts may help.

IS IT SAFE TO EXERCISE?

Yes. In an uncomplicated pregnancy, we recommend exercise as it makes labor easier, decreases the incidence of pre-term labor as well as cesarean section. If an exercise causes cramping, shortness of breath, or pain, then decrease the intensity or stop exercising and discuss with your doctor. You should be able to carry on a conversation while you exercise. It is not necessary to keep your heart rate below 140. Contact sports such as soccer, ice hockey, skiing, horseback riding, and water skiing are strongly discouraged. Scuba diving is not safe at any time during pregnancy.

WHEN DO I HAVE TO STOP RUNNING OR RIDING MY BIKE?

You can run and ride your bike as long as you are comfortable doing so. Your ligaments will become "looser" after 28 weeks. If you have knee pain, you should discontinue running. Your balance will

change during your third trimester which may limit your ability to run or ride. Please use common sense and stop before it becomes a problem.

I DRANK WINE, BEER, OR ALCOHOL BEFORE KNOWING I WAS PREGNANT. WILL THIS HARM MY BABY?

The baby has different blood circulation very early in pregnancy. A small amount of alcohol before missing a period is very unlikely to hurt the baby. After you know that you are pregnant, you should avoid all alcohol.

I HAVE A BELLY PIERCING. WHAT DO I DO?

Remove the ring before it starts to stretch. If you want to replace it during the pregnancy, see www.pregnancypiercing.com.

I JUST HAD AN ULTRASOUND AND THEY GAVE ME A DIFFERENT DUE DATE. IS MY BABY DUE AT A DIFFERENT TIME?

If the dates are off by greater than 2 weeks, then the due date may be changed. The ultrasound machine does not know when you got pregnant. It is giving an estimate based on the size of the baby. If you have a large baby, it may appear that you are further along in your pregnancy. You know when you became pregnant, not the machine!! It is common to have uterine contractions and visualize fibroids during the ultrasound.

SHOULD I AVOID EATING FISH WHILE PREGNANT?

The FDA has warned that some fish (shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tuna and tilefish) may contain levels of mercury that could lead to brain damage in the developing fetus and should not be consumed. Currently the FDA suggests not more than 12 ounces each week of fish that are low in mercury. Five of the most commonly eaten fish that are low in mercury are shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, Pollock and catfish. Albacore has more mercury than light canned tuna so the limit for this fish is six ounces. For more information on fish consumption advisories, go to the website: www.cfsan.fda.gov/~frf/sea-mehg.html UTH

CAN I EAT SUSHI, SOFT CHEESE, DELI MEATS AND HOT DOGS?

Yes. Tips for preventing foodborne illnesses can be found on the FDA website at www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/qa-topfd.html. Use the same precautions when you are pregnant that you normally use for food preparation and storage. Cooking fish does not decrease the mercury content. Make sure milk products are pasteurized.

WHAT CAN I DO FOR LEG CRAMPS?

Leg cramps are common during pregnancy, especially in the second and third trimester. The cause is unknown. Stay hydrated and try stretching more. There is some evidence that a magnesium supplement may help. Increasing your calcium or potassium intake does not help. When you get a cramp, straighten your leg, heel first, and gently flex your toes back toward your shins.

WHAT CHANGES CAN HAPPEN TO MY SKIN IN PREGNANCY?

It is common to have more acne during pregnancy. You may also develop a “mask” of pregnancy and a black line or linea nigra on your abdomen under your umbilicus. These changes are due to the increased hormones your body is producing. Other common changes are development of skin tags and more moles. Most of the changes are reversible after the pregnancy. If you are concerned about abnormal growth of any moles, please see a dermatologist.