BODY CHANGES IN PREGNANCY

You may experience some body changes during your pregnancy. Remember that every person experiences something different and every pregnancy you have will also be different.

Backache: Occurs mid- to late-pregnancy because your body changes in weight, shape and balance.

 What you can do: Use good posture

 Use a firm mattress

 Squat instead of bending

Wear shoes you are used to (low or flat heels are better)

To get up when lying down, roll on side first

Wear a pregnancy support

Breasts: Change in size throughout pregnancy because milk glands enlarge and there is an increase in fatty tissue. Wear a cotton supportive bra.

 Become tender and more sensitive through pregnancy because of an increase in blood flow.

 May secrete fluid (colostrum) from the fifth month on. This is your baby’s first food. A gauze pad or nursing pad will help absorb the fluid inside the bra. Avoid stimulation to decrease leakage.

 Your nursing bra will be the same in size or one cup larger than the bra you wear late in pregnancy.

Constipation: Occurs throughout pregnancy because the uterus takes up more room and hormones slow intestinal movement.

 What you can do: Drink 8-10 glasses of fluids daily

 Eat raw vegetables, fruit and whole grains daily

 Take a stool softener such as Colace

 Exercise with your doctor’s permission

Feeling Faint or Dizzy: Occurs in early and late pregnancy when you stand for a long time, have low blood sugar or too little iron in your blood.

 What you can do: When standing, move frequently

 Eat healthy foods in small amounts

 Try not to lay flat on your back

 Take short rest periods

 Take your vitamins

 Be sure to stay well hydrated

Headaches: Occur anytime from nasal congestion, fatigue and tension.

 If you normally suffer from migraines, you may find they improve or worsen during pregnancy.

 What you can do: Put a hot, moist towel over your eyes and forehead

 Rest and relax in a quiet place

 Do not take any medications unless approved by your doctor.

Heart Pounding: Occurs mid- to late-pregnancy as your heart meets your baby’s needs and because of extra blood volume in your system.

What you can do: Relax your body

 Take deep inhales and exhales

 If it continues, tell your doctor

Heartburn: Occurs mid- to late-pregnancy because digestion is slow and the growing uterus crowds your stomach.

 What you can do: Eat several small meals instead of large ones

 Avoid fried, spicy foods

 Don’t lay down right after eating

 Use good posture

 Drink lots of fluids when taking medications

 Keep your head slightly elevated to sleep

 Talk to your doctor about using a medication

Hemorrhoids: Occur mid- to late-pregnancy because of pressure from a growing uterus and increased blood volume.

 What you can do: Avoid constipation

 Perform Kegel exercises 40-100 times a day

 Rest on your left side

 Talk to your doctor about using medication

Muscle Cramps: Occur mid- to late-pregnancy due to not enough, or poorly absorbed, calcium and pressure from the growing uterus.

 What you can do: Eat foods containing calcium (milk, broccoli, spinach, etc.)

To ease a leg cramp, push your heel away from you and pull your toes back towards you

Talk to your doctor about calcium

Nausea and Vomiting: Occurs during the first three months because of hormone changes and not getting enough vitamin B and emotional changes.

 What you can do: Eat protein like meat or cheese before bed

 Eat crackers or other carbohydrates before you get out of bed

 Eat small, frequent meals

 Do not take your prenatal vitamin on an empty stomach

 If having juice, have it after eating other foods

 Talk to your doctor about other suggestions

Nosebleeds: Occur anytime due to increased blood volume.

 What you can do: Eat foods with vitamin C

 Humidify your home’s air

Pelvic Pain: Occurs because the joints relax and put pressure on the nerves.

 What you can do : Change position

 Try wearing a pregnancy support

 Sleep on your side with one leg forward and one back

 Use pillows to support your pelvis

Excessive Salivation: Occurs mid- to late-pregnancy due to an increase in saliva.

 What you can do: Chew gum

Shortness of Breath: Occurs near the end of the pregnancy because the uterus presses on the diaphragm as it grows.

 What you can do: Hold your arms above your head

 Sleep propped up on pillows

 Take slow, deep breaths

Skin Discoloration: Occurs mid- to late-pregnancy due to hormone changes

 What you can do: Avoid sun exposure

Stretch Marks: Occur because skin gets stretched beyond normal elasticity. About 90 percent of pregnant women experience stretch marks. They can occur on the breasts, abdomen and thighs.

 What you can do: Eat enough protein

 Eat foods with vitamins E and C

 Keep your skin soft and supple with lotions like cocoa butter

Swelling: Occurs late pregnancy because of natural body changes, lack of protein, tight clothing or long periods of sitting or standing.

 What you can do: Wear loose clothes

 Eat lots of protein

 Elevate your legs

 Change positions frequently

 Drink plenty of water

 Decrease your salt intake

Tiredness: Occurs early and late pregnancy due to hormonal changes.

 What you can do: Get plenty of sleep

 Rest periodically throughout the day

 Exercise regularly

Vaginal Discharge: Increases during pregnancy. The cervix secretes mucus and the mucus increases as the pregnancy advances.

 What you can do: Wear underwear with cotton crotch

 Bathe regularly

 Avoid douching

 Call your doctor if discharge burns, itches or smells