

Indigestion and Heartburn

Indigestion and heartburn are very common complaints during pregnancy, especially during the first and third trimesters. During the first trimester, heartburn is caused by increased *progesterone, the hormone that relaxes muscles during pregnancy, also relaxes the stomach valve* that keeps acid out of the esophagus. During the third trimester, the growing uterus crowds the stomach, forcing acid into the esophagus.

Tips for Coping

- ▷ Avoid greasy, spicy, or fried foods.
- ▷ Avoid gas-forming foods such as raw cabbage and beans.
- ▷ Avoid caffeinated or carbonated beverages and chocolate.
- ▷ Avoid acidic foods such as tomatoes, citrus fruits and juices.
- ▷ Sit down when you eat and try to relax.
- ▷ Eat slowly and chew thoroughly.
- ▷ Avoid drinking fluids during, just before, or immediately after a meal. Wait 30-60 minutes after eating to drink a beverage. Sip small amounts of fluid often during the day.
- ▷ Don't lie down after eating. Take a walk instead.
- ▷ Try not to eat three hours prior to bedtime.
- ▷ Eat frequent smaller meals instead of three large ones.
- ▷ Sip a cup of ginger tea or suck on ginger candies after meals.
- ▷ If indigestion keeps you awake at night, try to sleep propped up with pillows.
- ▷ Wear loose-fitting clothing, especially around the abdomen and waist.
- ▷ Avoid bending over at the waist. Bend at the knees.
- ▷ Never take any medication for heartburn without consulting your doctor or nurse.
- ▷ Avoid calcium-containing antacids, too much calcium can block iron absorption.
- ▷ Avoid antacids that list aluminum (such as aluminum hydroxide or aluminum carbonate) as an ingredient; it can cause constipation and even be toxic in large doses.
- ▷ Avoid antacids containing sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) or sodium citrate can cause water retention.
- ▷ Avoid remedies containing aspirin (such as Alka-Seltzer), look for salicylate or acetylsalicylic acid in ingredients lists.