

Prenatal Education

Key Messages for Ontario



Physical Changes during Pregnancy

Key Messages

It is normal to experience a variety of physical changes during your pregnancy while your baby grows and develops.

Pregnancy is a time of change for everyone – mother, baby, partner, and relationships. From conception to the birth of your baby, your body will go through an exciting transformation. Changing hormone levels are responsible for many of the physical and emotional changes that you experience during pregnancy. These changes can start and stop at various times during your pregnancy. Most of these changes resolve after birth.

Pregnancy changes may include:

- ▶ Backache.
- ▶ Nausea and vomiting.
- ▶ Constipation.
- ▶ Heartburn.
- ▶ Hemorrhoids.
- ▶ Frequent urination.
- ▶ Feeling tired.
- ▶ Increase in appetite.
- ▶ Increased vaginal discharge.
- ▶ Tender breasts.

Make sure you speak with your health care provider before taking medications to cope with any pregnancy discomforts.

Understanding these physical changes, and how to cope with them, may help you have a healthy and comfortable pregnancy.

During your first trimester, changing hormones may make you feel tired, have nausea and vomiting, and tender breasts. You may notice a change in your interest in sex.

During your second trimester, hormone levels even out, any signs of nausea may lessen, and you may feel a heightened sense of well-being. You will start to notice changes in your body's shape and size. You may have some back and joint aches. You may develop a brownish line down the middle of your belly and uneven brown marks around your eyes, nose, and cheek.

During your third trimester, you will become more visibly pregnant. Your baby may push on your lungs, stomach, and bladder, causing shortness of breath, heartburn, gas, and frequent urination. You may also have difficulty finding comfortable sleeping positions.

To help you cope with some of these changes you can:

- ▶ Rest when you are tired.
- ▶ Accept help from family and friends.
- ▶ Eat small amounts of healthy food many times during the day.
- ▶ Avoid wearing tight-fitting clothes.
- ▶ Participate in physical activities appropriate for your stage of pregnancy and fitness level.
- ▶ Wear comfortable, supportive shoes.
- ▶ Use sunscreen and wear a hat when outdoors.
- ▶ Use extra pillows in bed to increase your comfort.
- ▶ Talk to your health care provider about your concerns.

Discuss any unusual changes or concerns with your health care provider.

Tell your health care provider right away if you have:

- ▶ Unusual or ongoing headaches.
- ▶ Ongoing nausea and vomiting.
- ▶ Changes in eyesight or spots before your eyes.
- ▶ Dizziness or feeling unwell.
- ▶ Vaginal bleeding or leaking of fluid.
- ▶ Regular contractions.
- ▶ Lower back pain/pressure or change in lower backache.
- ▶ Feeling that the baby is pushing down.
- ▶ Any noticeable decrease in your baby's normal movement.
- ▶ Severe abdominal pain.
- ▶ Sudden swelling of the face, hands, or feet.
- ▶ Calf pain.
- ▶ Unexplained rash.
- ▶ Fever and chills (i.e., temperature above 38.3° C or 101° F).
- ▶ Burning sensation when urinating.
- ▶ Feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or sad.
- ▶ If you are in a motor vehicle accident of any kind, have a fall or any injury to your stomach area.

Learn more about coping with the physical changes in pregnancy.

You can find out more about coping with the physical changes in pregnancy from the following resources. More suggestions can be found in the Resources and Links section.

- ▶ Your local public health unit 1-866-532-3161
- ▶ UnlockFood.ca
- ▶ oMama

www.omama.com