

The Women's **Wellness** Centre

FAQs in Pregnancy

SEPTEMBER 2011

FAQs in Pregnancy and the Post Natal Period

Early Pregnancy:

Why do I feel sick in pregnancy?

Pregnancy sickness is the most common medical condition of early pregnancy, but how bad it is varies widely from woman to woman. You may get the odd bout of mild queasiness when you first wake up, or find that certain smells trigger waves of nausea throughout the day. You may have to endure weeks or even months of feeling or being sick morning, noon and night.

Although it won't help your nausea, feeling sick is actually a good sign that your pregnancy hormone levels are high. The cause of pregnancy sickness is unknown, but it is thought to be connected to the hormone human chorionic gonadotrophin (HCG). This is produced in large quantities until your placenta takes over the job of maintaining and nourishing your baby at around 12 to 14 weeks.

Eat a balanced diet if you can, but if you are feeling very sick, eat whatever you can cope with. Your baby can catch up on his/her nutrients later on in your pregnancy when you're feeling better.

What remedies can help morning sickness?

- Eating light meals often
- Maintaining fluids
- Reducing stress levels
- Good amounts of sleep / rest
- Light exercise
- Avoid foods and smells that seem to trigger nausea. Sometimes this will be nearly every food or every smell
- Ginger, teas, cookies, even the spice can be helpful in preventing nausea
- Acupressure bands can be worn like bracelets
- Homeopathic remedies
- Acupuncture
- Peppermint, either smelling it in aromatherapy form or sipping the tea can help curb nausea. It's also known to help with sagging energy levels
- Two crackers before your head leaves the pillow in the morning is old but wise advice

(For acupuncture and homeopathic advice please contact Kristina our acupuncturist).

Flying - It is safe to fly before 12 weeks?

If you're carrying one baby and have had an uncomplicated pregnancy then you can fly up to 36 weeks of pregnancy. However, airlines are sometimes unwilling to carry

women who are more than 28 weeks pregnant because of the risk of premature labour.

Ticket agents won't ask if you're pregnant when you book a seat, but you could be questioned about your due date at the boarding gate. In fact, an airline can bar you from travel if they are worried about how far along in your pregnancy you are. To avoid delays – and more importantly, to confirm it's safe for you to fly – get written permission to fly from your doctor or midwife.

Travel policies vary with each airline, so ask about restrictions when you book your flight. Don't forget to take into account how far along in your pregnancy you'll be on the return trip, too. In addition, you should not fly in small planes that don't have pressurized cabins.

Is it safe to fly the remainder of my pregnancy?

- Each patient has their own individual risk factors.
- It is really up to the airlines, all of whom have their own individual cut off.
- Short haul flights (Europe) you can usually travel all the way to the end of term
- Long haul flights (3+ hours) vary with airline, but usually ok before 24 or after 30 wks
- It is not advisable to travel between 24 – 29 weeks for long haul
- Risks are Thrombosis (clots in legs or lungs)
- You will need:
 1. Fit to fly letter
 2. Aspirin (low dose) and flight socks to cover the flight there and back
 3. Travel insurance that covers pregnancy
 4. Be aware that in the very unlikely event anything happens out there (e.g. small bleed etc), the doctors will not be prepared to do a letter to cover your travelling back

General Pregnancy:

Ailments/ Medications in pregnancy?

A simple rule of pregnancy is that one keeps all medication to the minimum amount required to be effective. The less one uses the less is absorbed by the body. A safe recommendation is use the littlest amount required to be effective.

I have gas/ wind pains in my stomach?

Try Gaviscon; take this after meals and before bedtime. Peppermint tea is also very good at aiding digestion.

I have piles?

Piles are a nuisance but very common in pregnancy.

Tips: Keep hydrated, avoid constipation and straining, have a high fibre diet, try Fybogel sachets to help bulk stool.

Use Anusol suppositories and cream.

You do not need to see the GP with mild symptoms unless these get worse with treatment.

(For Fybogel and Anusol ask at our Reception pharmacy).

What can I take for Diarrhoea/ vomiting?

Unfortunately, it is time limiting and there is not much you can do other than drink plenty of fluids with a light diet, and take paracetamol if you have a fever. If your symptoms do not improve after 48 hrs contact your Dr for advice.

What can I take for Flu/ cold?

- Paracetamol is fine for fever and pain (avoid ibuprofen)
- Do not take combination/ all in one drugs- Treat symptoms individually
- To treat a sore throat – gargle soluble aspirin, *spit don't swallow*
- Throat lozenges are fine
- Drink plenty of fluids
- For blocked noses: nasal decongestants/ nose drops are fine to use sparingly at night

I have hay fever – what can I do?

We usually say no medication in the first trimester as a general rule of thumb, once beyond the first trimester we can be less strict.

If clearly your symptoms are deeply affecting your quality of life then you will need to take some antihistamines. I would suggest you can take Zirtec, but you just need to take it sparingly and in order to take the edge off. You should not take it as you would in the non-pregnant state i.e. daily and prophylactically.

Also, if possible, do try and avoid the high pollen areas that will aggravate your symptoms.

Some herbal remedies to treat hay fever symptoms are available from most health shops.

Can I take Aspirin as well as paracetamol?

Yes paracetamol acts in a completely different way from aspirin. The low aspirin dose prescribed for air travel is to prevent clots; it is not enough for pain relief. If you are travelling and require analgesia contact your Dr or a pharmacist.

I have been prescribed Amoxicillin antibiotics – are these ok to use in pregnancy?

As long as you don't have an allergy to Penicillin then this is safe to use in pregnancy and has been used for many years. If you have a penicillin allergy then your Dr will need to prescribe a "non penicillin family" drug for you to take.

I have ringworm?

Use topical anti-ringworm or antifungal creams which are safe, but not the tablets.

I have been having nose bleeds?

Nose bleeds are common in pregnancy, like gum bleeds, and are quite normal due to the pregnancy hormones. You need to avoid, if possible, blowing your nose too

vigorously and also not picking at the nose when a clot has formed, otherwise it sets it all off again.

Thrush in pregnancy:

Due to the vast hormone changes in pregnancy upsetting the PH balance in the vagina thrush is common in pregnancy (and can be recurrent). Symptoms are commonly vaginal itchiness/ discharge. Thrush can also be caused by antibiotics. Canesten pessary and cream duos are perfectly fine during pregnancy and will usually clear the thrush up. If symptoms are no better after treatment you will need to take a swab at the Centre to test for other organisms/bacteria that may be causing your symptoms.

Pain in the abdomen:

Always best to get checked out by your midwife/ Consultant/ Ultrasound scan.

Questions that may be asked:

Is there Blood loss?

Is the pain continuous/ intermittent/ or on movement?

Have you had a busy or strenuous day?

Is it getting worse?

Pain in the second trimester (16-22 weeks) - Possible causes:

You often get a lot of stretching pain during this time due to the ligaments and it usually radiates to the groin. It will usually settle down on its own accord. If you are concerned please call your Dr or midwife.

In the third trimester (from 30 weeks) – possible causes:

The baby is pushing on the pelvic floor, this is normal as the ligaments are now more pronounced. Manipulation and support from osteopath/ chiropractor could help. However you may need to be checked to ensure you are not going into pre-term labour.

Chickenpox (Varicella) in pregnancy

You will be tested at your booking bloods for your immunity: If Varicella is positive or immune it means you have had it before and therefore are not at risk of getting it in pregnancy if you come into contact with someone affected.

Parvovirus (Slapped Cheek Syndrome)

Slapped cheek syndrome, also known as fifth disease, is caused by a virus called parvovirus B19. The main symptom is a blotchy red rash on your face that looks like you have slapped cheeks. Other symptoms can include headache, mild fever and a sore throat. However, in about 20-30% of infections, there are no symptoms.

Slapped cheek syndrome usually affects children. Studies have shown that 60% of adults in the UK have antibodies to parvovirus B19. It's thought that once you've been infected, you'll be immune for the rest of your life.

If you think you have been in contact with a child with Parvo virus please contact your Dr who will do a simple blood test to check your immunity.

Can I visit the Dentist during pregnancy?

We recommend you to visit the dentist in the first half of your pregnancy. Dental problems will often get worse in pregnancy so should be dealt with promptly.

Inform your dentist of your pregnancy as they will need to decide what they can or cannot do in early pregnancy e.g. x-rays etc.

When should I stop sleeping on my tummy?

Don't worry. You feel when you shouldn't sleep on your tummy anymore... it will get uncomfortable. As a guideline sleeping on your left side in pregnancy is recommended as the safest sleeping position.

Can I wear nail polish?

Yes it is safe to wear nail polish although if you are booked to have an elective caesarean section you will need to remove all of your nail polish prior to your hospital admission for the surgery.

Do I have to take my pregnancy vitamins at the same time each day?

No, it doesn't matter if they are taken at different times – as long as you take them daily. Most people find taking them at the same time of day with a routine (i.e. with breakfast) ensures that they are not missed. If you are feeling nauseous in the 1st trimester try to take them following a meal so that they are not digested on an empty stomach.

Can I use Hair Dye?

It is not recommended in the first trimester, and then sparingly/ to the minimal amount thereafter. If you do use it after the 1st trimester, we would recommend you use vegetable/ organic dyes, so be careful with the type of dye you use.

Can I eat shell fish/ sea food/meat?

It is not advisable to eat seafood/ shell fish cold. If it is fresh, cooked well and eaten hot then you can eat it in moderate amounts.

Don't eat shark, marlin and swordfish, and limit the amount of tuna you eat to:

- no more than two tuna steaks a week (about 140g cooked or 170g raw each), or
- four medium-sized cans of tuna a week (about 140g when drained)

These types of fish contain high levels of mercury that can damage your baby's developing nervous system. Don't eat more than two portions of oily fish a week. Oily fish includes fresh tuna (but not canned tuna), salmon, mackerel, sardines and trout.

Don't eat liver or liver products such as liver pâté or liver sausage, as they may contain a lot of vitamin A. Too much vitamin A can harm your baby.

You can eat well cooked meats (lamb, steak etc).

Can I eat Peanuts if I am pregnant?

If you would like to eat peanuts or food containing peanuts (such as peanut butter) during pregnancy, you can choose to do so as part of a healthy balanced diet, unless you are allergic to them or your health professional advises you not to.

You may have heard that some women have, in the past, chosen not to eat peanuts when they were pregnant. This is because the Government previously advised women that they may wish to avoid eating peanuts if there was a history of allergy (such as asthma, hay fever, eczema, food allergy or other types of allergy) in their child's immediate family.

This advice has now been changed because the latest research has shown that there is no clear evidence to say if eating or not eating peanuts during pregnancy affects the chances of your baby developing a peanut allergy

Can I drink caffeine if I am pregnant?

High levels of caffeine can result in babies having a low birth weight, which can increase the risk of health problems in later life. Too much can also cause miscarriage. Caffeine is naturally found in lots of foods, such as coffee, tea and chocolate, and is added to some soft drinks and energy drinks. Some cold and flu remedies also contain caffeine. Talk to your midwife, doctor or pharmacist before taking these remedies.

You don't need to cut out caffeine completely but don't have more than 200mg a day. The approximate amounts of caffeine found in food and drinks are:

- one mug of instant coffee: 100mg
- one mug of filter coffee: 140mg
- one mug of tea: 75mg
- one can of cola: 40mg
- one can of energy drink: 80mg
- one 50g bar of plain (dark) chocolate: around 50mg
- one 50g bar of milk chocolate: around 25mg

So if you have, for example, one bar of chocolate and one mug of filter coffee, you have reached almost 200mg of caffeine. Don't worry if you occasionally have more than this amount. The risks are quite small. To cut down on caffeine, try decaffeinated tea and coffee, fruit juice or mineral water instead of regular tea, coffee, cola and energy drinks.

(For a more detailed consultation you can see our Midwife or Dietician).

Would control tights (like Spanx) squash the baby?

Impossible to squash baby from the outside as the baby is completely protected by the bag of amniotic fluid and then by the uterus. You cannot compress through all of that. All the tights will do is make you feel uncomfortable but the baby is fine.

Can I have the Flu Injection/ Swine flu jab?

Yes you can have the normal seasonal flu jab in pregnancy after any cold has cleared. The swine flu jab is no longer routinely needed unless you are working in a pandemic environment. Please consult your GP or occupational health department for seasonal advice or to book to have your jabs.

Ante Natal Classes:

When should I book Antenatal classes?

Most classes start around 28 - 34 weeks although women secure their places much earlier, usually following their 20 week scan. (Ask at Reception for details).

Late Pregnancy:

What is GBS and why am I being offered the test?

Group B Streptococcus (GBS) is a normal bacterium which colonises up to **30%** of adults in the UK, without symptoms or side-effects. It is most commonly found in the intestines, as part of the normal gut flora (bacteria living in the gastrointestinal tract). It is also often found in the vagina of adult women. It is known as a 'commensal' - an organism which lives on another without causing any harm. GBS can, however, occasionally cause infection, most commonly in newborn babies. GBS can more rarely cause infection in adults (typically women during pregnancy or after birth, the elderly and people with serious underlying medical conditions which impair their immune system). At around week 34 of your pregnancy we offer you a (pain free) vaginal swab test to test for these GBS bacteria. If you are found to be a carrier of GBS your Dr or Midwife will discuss with you the need to have antibiotics in labour to reduce the transmission of the GBS bacteria to your baby.

(For more information or to discuss the GBS test please contact our midwives).

MRSA – Why am I being tested?

If you are attending Chelsea and Westminster Hospital for planned or emergency surgery you will be screened for MRSA either before or on the day of admission.

MRSA (Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus) is a bacterium that often lives harmlessly on the skin—when it lives on the skin without causing infection this is called 'being colonised'. MRSA likes to live in moist, warm areas such as inside the nose, the groin and under the arms. MRSA is resistant to some but not all antibiotics. Whilst living on the skin it doesn't usually cause any problems but it can cause infection if it gets into a wound or into a catheter or drip. MRSA infections are treated with strong antibiotics that are only used for MRSA.

We will screen your nose, armpit and groin to see if you are colonised with MRSA. If you are found to be colonised—don't worry—it doesn't mean that you have an infection and need antibiotics. You will be given creams to get rid of the MRSA from your skin. Eradicating the MRSA makes it less likely that you will get an infection after your operation.

<http://www.chelwest.nhs.uk/your-visit/information-for-patients/mrsa-screening>

Early Labour:

At which point in labour should I go into hospital?

Every pregnancy is different and the time to go into hospital will differ from woman to woman. As a general rule, as your contractions become 5-10 minutes apart and lasting 45 seconds -1 minute in length start to think about making your way to the hospital. If you feel unwell or unsupported at any point at home then call the Delivery Unit. Labour wards are staffed by midwives 24 hours a day and they don't mind you calling for advice or reassurance.

Post Natal:

Can I have intercourse?

You can start to have intercourse as soon as you feel physically ready. If you had stitches following the birth it is advisable to wait until your six week check up to ensure the area is healed and that the risk of infection is minimal. It is always advisable to use some lubricating gel, such as KY gel, the first couple of times as you can occasionally feel a bit dry and should be fine thereafter.

Can I perform sports/ swim?

It is fine if not bleeding. Always start gradually and build up the intensity.

Can I use tampons?

It is not recommended to use tampons until after your 1st period.

What is Carbegoline for?

Carbegoline is used to suppress the hormones that cause lactation. It is used if somebody doesn't want the body to begin making milk after the birth or if you wish to turn off the milk supply if you have already established breastfeeding. It usually works best immediately after the birth before the body starts to establish breast feeding.

(To discuss breastfeeding issues & concerns please contact the midwives at the Centre).

When can I drive?

The DVLA rules state that are not advised to drive before your six week check when your Dr has advised that it is safe to do so. Many insurance policies don't allow driving for six weeks following caesarean section and some even for vaginal births. Always check with your insurer first.

Can I wear corset knickers?

Yes, if your stitches are dry and no oozing is seen by your midwife you can wear corset knickers if they are not too uncomfortable.

How do I know if my stitches are healing?

They will stretch and you may experience a tugging sensation etc during healing process. If they are painful have them checked by your midwife – stitches that are healed and painful can sometimes be removed easily. The stitched area should be healed and feel significantly better at six weeks.

I am having night sweats?

These are completely normal after delivery. It is a way pregnant women get rid of extra fluid accumulated in pregnancy. If it persists we can check your thyroid function but it is a very normal symptom.

Can I use hair dye - if breastfeeding?

Yes, hair dye is safe to use whilst breast feeding.