

Heartburn Relief

Heartburn is one of the unpleasant side-effects of being pregnant; it is caused by the hormone, progesterone, which relaxes the valve at the top of your stomach, causing a small amount of stomach acid, sometimes with partially digested food, to surge upwards into your oesophagus (gullet).

Sometimes sickness in early pregnancy can be worsened by heartburn, or indigestion can make you feel sick. If you are expecting more than one baby or your baby is very large this will make your heartburn worse. If your baby is in a breech position in late pregnancy, his head will press up under your diaphragm and may trigger heartburn. Eating certain foods and smoking will also make things worse.

Eating small meals more frequently will prevent your stomach becoming overfull and pushing up under your diaphragm. Try to eat your main meal of the day at lunchtime if at all possible and eat your evening meal early in the evening, so that your body has time to digest it before you go to bed. Avoid spicy, rich, fatty and fried foods and anything else which triggers the symptoms. Sugar, tea, coffee and certain food additives may also exacerbate heartburn. Don't drink liquids with your food as this causes your digestive juices to become diluted and therefore less effective, but do drink between meals.

Lying down to relax after a meal is likely to cause regurgitation, so it is a good idea to sit upright for a while; you may also find you have to sleep propped up on two or three pillows at night in later pregnancy if the problem gets worse.

It may be worth trying complementary therapies such as homoeopathy, aromatherapy or acupressure, or try the following suggestions:

- peppermint, fennel, chamomile or dandelion tea (do not take dandelion tea in large doses or if taking antihypertensives)
- ginger
- milk
- malt drink
- 3 umeboshi plums (health food shop) boil in a pint of water, keep juice in fridge. Drink as required. Ask for advice.
- Slippery elm "Thompsons" old fashioned stomach soothing drink (health food shop) – Ask for advice.
- Raw garlic or garlic capsules
- Cardamom seeds – chew!
- Cashew nuts – chew well into a paste before swallowing

Written by Valerie Gommon, BA (Hons), RM, Independent Midwife
www.3shiresmidwife.co.uk