

Common Pregnancy Discomforts & How to Manage Them

Pregnancy brings many changes to your body, some of which can cause **mild to moderate discomfort**. Below are some of the most common discomforts, their causes, and ways to manage them.

Morning Sickness (Nausea & Vomiting)

Morning sickness is **very common** in early pregnancy and is caused by **hormonal changes**. It usually improves after the **first trimester**, but for some women, it may last longer.

What You Can Do:

- ✓ **Eat small, frequent meals** instead of large ones.
 - ✓ **Sip fluids throughout the day** to stay hydrated.
 - ✓ **Avoid fatty, spicy, and strong-smelling foods.**
 - ✓ **Try ginger** (tea, lollies, or supplements).
 - ✓ **Vitamin B6 supplements** may help.
 - 🔴 **Seek medical advice** if you cannot keep fluids down.
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Backache in Pregnancy

Up to **70% of pregnant women** experience back pain due to **relaxin**, a hormone that **softens and stretches ligaments**.

Avoid:

- 🔴 Lifting heavy objects
- 🔴 Bending over incorrectly
- 🔴 High heels
- 🔴 Standing or sitting for too long


What Helps:

- ✓ Bend at your **knees**, not your waist.
- ✓ Wear **flat, supportive shoes**.
- ✓ Sit with **good posture** and back support.
- ✓ **Rest frequently**.
- ✓ Try **aqua aerobics, pilates, massage, or acupuncture**.
- ✓ Use **hot packs** for relief.
- ✓ **Pain relief (e.g. Panadol or Panadeine)** can be used if recommended by your doctor.

Bladder & Bowel Problems

Frequent Urination

This often starts **early in pregnancy** and continues as the baby grows.

 **See your doctor** if you have pain when urinating or blood in your urine (could indicate an infection).

Incontinence

Leaking urine is common due to **weakened pelvic floor muscles**.

 **Pelvic floor exercises (Kegels)** can help strengthen muscles.

Constipation

Hormonal changes **slow digestion**, leading to constipation.

✓ Drink **plenty of water**.

✓ Eat **high-fibre foods** (vegetables, fruits, whole grains).

✓ Stay **active** (walking, gentle exercise).

Haemorrhoids (Piles)

Swollen veins around the anus can cause **pain, itching, or bleeding**.

✓ **Avoid constipation** (high-fibre diet & fluids).

✓ Use **doctor-recommended ointments** if needed.

 **Rarely, surgery is required.**

Skin Changes


Chloasma (Pregnancy Mask)

Dark patches on the **face** caused by **hormones**.

✓ Use **broad-spectrum sunscreen** and wear a **hat** when outside.

Stretch Marks

Common due to **skin stretching** as the belly and breasts grow.

 **No cream can prevent them**, but they **fade over time**.

Swollen Ankles & Hands

Caused by **fluid retention**, common at the end of the day or after long periods of standing.

What Helps:

- ✓ Avoid salty foods.
- ✓ Elevate your feet when resting.
- ✓ Light exercise (walking, stretching).

 **If swelling is sudden or severe, seek medical advice, as it may be a sign of pre-eclampsia.**

Leg Cramps

Painful muscle cramps, usually **at night**.

What Helps:

- ✓ Magnesium supplements may help.
 - ✓ Stretching before bed.
 - ✓ Regular exercise.
 - ✓ Drink more water.
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Headaches

Common due to **hormonal changes**. May also be triggered by **dehydration or fatigue**.

What Helps:

- ✓ Drink plenty of water.
- ✓ Get rest and relaxation.
- ✓ Use simple pain relief (e.g. Panadol).


 **See your doctor if headaches are severe, frequent, or not relieved by painkillers.**

Indigestion & Heartburn

Caused by **hormonal changes** and the **growing baby pressing on the stomach**.

What Helps:

- ✓ Eat small, frequent meals.


- ✓ **Avoid trigger foods** (spicy, fatty, or acidic foods).
 - ✓ **Sleep with an extra pillow** to keep your head elevated.
 - ✓ **Avoid eating just before bed.**
 - ✓ **Antacids** may help (ask your doctor).
 -  **Seek medical advice if symptoms persist.**
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Vaginal Discharge

Normal Discharge:

- ✓ **White, clear, and mucous-like.**
- ✓ **No bad smell or irritation.**

Abnormal Discharge:

- ✗ **Yellow/green, smelly, foamy, or causes itching** → May indicate **infection**.
 - ✗ **Watery leakage** → Could be **amniotic fluid**.
 -  **Report any unusual discharge to your doctor or midwife.**
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Final Thoughts

- ✓ **Most pregnancy discomforts are normal** but should be **monitored and managed**.
- ✓ **Healthy lifestyle choices** can reduce symptoms.
- ✓ **Always speak to your doctor or midwife** if symptoms are severe or concerning.

For more information, visit [RANZCOG](https://www.ranzcog.org.au) or ask your healthcare provider.