Experiencing headaches during pregnancy is one of the most common discomforts and complaints. Headaches may occur at any time during your pregnancy, but they tend to be most common during the first and third trimesters.

**What causes headaches during pregnancy?**

An increase in headaches during the first trimester is believed to be caused by the surge of hormones along with an increase in the blood volume circulating throughout your body. These headaches may be further aggravated by stress, poor posture or changes in your vision. Other causes may include one of the following:

- Lack of sleep
- Low blood sugar
- Dehydration
- Caffeine withdrawal
- Stress (too many changes)
- Get plenty of rest and relaxation
- Exercise
- Eat well-balanced meals
- Apply cold or heat packs to your head

If you are not able to prevent headaches, there are still things you can do to help them go away. During pregnancy, you want to try and relieve your headache by natural means if possible. Pain relief medications such as aspirin and ibuprofen are not recommended in most pregnancies; however, acetaminophen may be recommended by your health care provider.

You may try to relieve your headache with one of the following natural remedies:

- If you have a sinus headache, apply a warm compress around your eyes and nose
- If you have a tension headache, apply a cold compress or ice pack at the base of your neck
- Maintain your blood sugar by eating smaller, more frequent meals. This may also help prevent future headaches
- Get a massage. Massaging your shoulders and neck is an effective way to relieve pain
- Rest in a dark room and practice deep breathing
- Take a warm shower or bath

Applying heat or cold to the sides of the head, the eyes, or along the back of the neck

Women who have regular migraine headaches may discover they experience fewer migraines during pregnancy; however, some women may encounter the same number or even more migraine headaches. If you are pregnant, it is important to talk to your health care provider about any medications you may be taking for headaches.
is one of the best ways to reduce or relieve the pain associated with a headache. Heating pads and cold packs come in a variety of shapes and sizes, but most require using a microwave or the freezer first. Another drawback to some of these is the heat or cold subsides, as time goes on.

You may also reduce the likelihood of migraine headaches by avoiding common triggers of migraine headaches. Potential triggers include:

- Chocolate
- Alcohol
- Yogurt
- Aged cheese
- Peanuts
- Breads with fresh yeast
- Preserved meats
- Sour cream

**When should you contact your health care provider?**

Unfortunately, headaches are a normal part of pregnancy; however you should be able to experience some relief. Contact your health care provider:

- Before taking any medications
- If you do not experience any relief from the remedies above
- Your headaches get worse or more persistent
- You experience headaches which are different than normal
- Your headaches are accompanied by: blurry vision, sudden weight gain, pain in the upper right abdomen, and swelling in the hands and face

For more information, visit AmericanPregnancy.org

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