Migraine headaches are different from stress or tension headaches. Migraine headaches are a type of vascular headache that is a result from blood vessels dilating in the brain.

If you were prone to getting migraines before pregnancy, you may experience stronger headaches during pregnancy, or you may find that they diminish. It is also normal to experience your first migraine when you are pregnant. Some studies have found a slight correlation between migraines and hormones. Women tend to get migraines more often than men.

What is a migraine headache?
A migraine headache usually starts out dull and then eventually becomes a throbbing constant pulsating pain in the temples, front of the head or base of the head. Migraines are sometimes but not always accompanied by nausea and vomiting. Some people may experience an aura. An aura is wavy or jagged lines, or dots of flashing lights. You may also experience tunnel vision or blind spots.

Is there any danger for a pregnant woman to have migraines?
The only danger is when your headache may be a sign of something else. You should ALWAYS call your health care provider when:

- Your headache is accompanied by a fever
- Your headache persists for more than a few hours or returns frequently
- You are experiencing blurred vision

It is ALWAYS important to let your health care provider know when you are experiencing any headaches and the details about them.

How can a pregnant woman treat a migraine headache?
Keep a headache diary: This diary should include when the headache happened, what “triggered” it, and how long it lasted. If you keep a log of your headaches, you can learn what triggers them and therefore avoid those things. Common triggers may include but are not limited to:

- Stress
- Chocolate
- Cheese
- Coffee
- Weather
- Hormones
Triggers are different for everyone; this is why it is important for you to keep a headache diary. Common home remedies for migraine headaches include:

- Apply a cold towel on your head
- Take a cold shower
- Take a nap
- Exercise
- Biofeedback (ask your doctor)
- Relaxation techniques such as meditation or yoga

Applying heat or cold to the sides of the head, the eyes, or along the back of the neck is one of the best ways to reduce or relieve the pain associated with a migraine. 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 with some of these is the heat or cold subsides as time goes on.

**Medications for Migraine relief:** Most health care providers consider acetaminophen to be the pain relief medication of choice during pregnancy but you should always talk with your own personal health care provider before taking any medication. Pregnant women should NOT take anything with aspirin unless prescribed by a health care provider. Consult with your health care provider about the best form of pain relief for your migraines.

For more information, visit AmericanPregnancy.org