Heartburn during Pregnancy

Heartburn is a common complaint during pregnancy. Although it has nothing to do with the heart, heartburn involves a burning sensation in the center of the chest.

What causes heartburn during pregnancy?
Heartburn occurs when the valve between the stomach and the food pipe (esophagus) are unable to prevent the stomach acids from passing back into the esophagus. Pregnancy can increase the frequency of heartburn because the hormone progesterone causes the valve to relax. This allows the stomach acid to pass into the esophagus and irritate the lining.

Heartburn and indigestion are more common during the third trimester because the growing uterus puts pressure on the intestines and the stomach. The pressure on the stomach may also push contents back up into the esophagus.

Here are some helpful hints to avoid heartburn:
- Eat five to six smaller meals throughout the day rather than three large meals
- Wait an hour after eating to lie down
- Avoid spicy, greasy and fatty foods

If you are experiencing heartburn, there are a few natural things you can do to relieve the symptoms:
- Eat yogurt or drink a glass of milk
- Try a tablespoon of honey in a glass of warm milk

Over-the-counter antacids may prove helpful in relieving heartburn problems. Do not take over-the-counter antacids without speaking to your health care provider. First, some antacids contain high levels of sodium, which can cause fluid buildup in body tissues. Some may also contain lead.

If your heartburn symptoms are severe, your health care provider may prescribe medication for you.

For more information, visit AmericanPregnancy.org

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