

Heartburn

Several factors contribute to the heartburn experienced by pregnant women. As the uterus expands, the growing baby presses against the stomach. When food is eaten, a burning sensation can result from the stomach contents being pushed into the lower esophagus. A relaxation of the muscle between the stomach and the esophagus during pregnancy can also contribute to heartburn. While heartburn can occur at any stage of pregnancy, it is most likely to be bothersome in the last trimester.

Suggestions for coping with heartburn

1. Eat five or six small meals each day instead of three large meals. Try not to go more than three or four hours without eating.
2. Limit your intake of fat, fried foods and spicy foods. Choose lean meats and low fat or nonfat dairy products.
3. Avoid foods and beverages containing caffeine, such as coffee, tea and colas. Caffeine can irritate your stomach lining.
4. Limit intake of acidic foods, such as citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit), coffee (including decaf) and tomato products, if these make your heartburn worse.
5. Wear clothing that is loose and comfortable. Tight clothing can put pressure on your abdomen.
6. Don't bend over or lie down shortly after eating, or slouch in your chair/sofa while watching TV. Try to finish your last meal or snack two to three hours before reclining or going to bed.
7. Elevate the head of your bed by four to six inches by placing blocks under the bedposts.
8. Snack on dry, high-carbohydrate foods such as plain crackers, rice cakes or dry toast.
9. If you take antacids that contain calcium, make sure that you do not take in more than 2500 milligrams of calcium per day.

If you have questions, a nutrition education specialist is available to help at 508-852-6175 or 1-888-392-0183.