






PREGNANCY NIGGLES

... and how to treat them

Health note
Tell your GP or your midwife if you get headaches that are accompanied by flashing lights, sudden swelling and weight gain and/or nausea as these could be a sign of pre-eclampsia.

PROBLEM	WHY IT HAPPENS	WHAT YOU CAN DO
<p>Headaches</p> 	<p>Headaches are very common in early pregnancy – hormonal changes, changes in your blood pressure or low blood sugar may be to blame.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Try to avoid painkillers, especially during the first three months. Paracetamol is usually safe, but follow the recommended dose. ● Drink at least eight glasses of water a day. ● Ibuprofen may be taken in weeks 14-27 only if essential and consult a health professional. Avoid aspirin throughout unless advised by your doctor.
<p>Tiredness</p>	<p>Disturbed sleep is common. Causes include cramp, needing the loo and being unable to get comfy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have a warm bath and a warm milky drink before bed. ● Some essential oils are not suitable in pregnancy, but after the first trimester, two drops of lavender oil in your bath may help you relax.
<p>Stretchmarks</p>	<p>These are caused by a weakening of the fibres of the skin as it stretches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moisturising your skin with creams or oils may lessen the effects. 
<p>Heartburn</p>	<p>Hormones can cause the valve at the entrance to your stomach to relax so that acid escapes back upwards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some antacids are suitable in pregnancy, so ask your pharmacist or GP to recommend one. ● Eat little and often and avoid fatty and spicy foods. ● Drink fluids at different times to your meals. 
<p>Backache</p>	<p>As your baby grows, the extra weight can affect your posture and put strain on your lower back muscles.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hot or cold compresses can help ease aches and pains. ● If pain is severe a support belt may help. Ask your midwife. ● Try sleeping with a wedge-shaped pillow under your tummy. ● Avoiding lifting heavy objects and wear flat shoes.
<p>Varicose veins and haemorrhoids (piles)</p>	<p>Pregnancy hormones cause the walls of your veins to relax making circulation sluggish – this can result in varicose veins on your legs and haemorrhoids. Haemorrhoids can be made worse by pressure from your growing uterus and straining if you are constipated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Your pharmacist, midwife or doctor will be able to recommend a suitable haemorrhoid cream. ● Witch hazel applied to the affected area can help with both niggles. ● For varicose veins regular gentle exercise can help to maintain good circulation. 
<p>Constipation</p>	<p>Hormonal changes make the muscles of your intestines relax so that food doesn't move through as quickly as usual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 'Bulk' laxatives that contain ispaghula (fibre) may be suitable, ask your GP or midwife to advise you. ● Ensure you get lots of fibre (wholemeal bread, cereals, fruit and vegetables) in your diet and drink plenty of fluids. ● Take regular, gentle exercise.
<p>Morning sickness</p> 	<p>There are different theories about what causes morning sickness – which most commonly occurs in early pregnancy and can last all day. Hormonal changes and changes in blood pressure may play a part. Tiredness can make feelings of nausea worse but doesn't cause it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eat frequent snacks rather than large meals. ● Avoid foods that are rich, fatty or spicy. ● Some women find that ginger can help alleviate feelings of nausea. ● If you feel sick first thing in the morning, have a biscuit or a cracker before you get up. ● Homeopathic and other alternative remedies may help. Consult a registered practitioner for advice. ● Travel sickness wristbands work for some women.

Health note
Some research shows that ginger may be effective, but for some women it may make symptoms worse and trigger heartburn. If you are taking anti-coagulant drugs, aspirin or other similar medicines, you should avoid it altogether.