



Excellence in Women's Healthcare

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Migraine Headaches During Pregnancy

Headaches are very common during pregnancy, especially during the first trimester. Women with a history of migraines may find that they have fewer migraines during pregnancy. Some women, however, have more frequent migraines during pregnancy. There are also women who have never had a migraine before that suddenly start having problems with it once they become pregnant. There is some evidence that hormones play a role in migraine headaches.

Headaches may be worse during pregnancy because of the shift in hormone levels. Usually headaches start to get better after the first trimester when hormone levels become more stable.

What is a migraine?

Migraines are a type of vascular headache. They are caused by the blood vessels in the head constricting and then dilating. When the blood vessels dilate (become bigger) they cause severe pain and sometimes other symptoms. Women's blood volume increases during pregnancy. Changes in blood volume may contribute to migraines during pregnancy.

Symptoms of migraine

Severe pain (often on one side of the head)

Light sensitivity

Blurred vision or visual disturbances (may see zig zag lines)

Nausea/vomiting

If you have a migraine it is important to call your doctor right away because a migraine can be symptoms of serious life threatening conditions such as pre-eclampsia.

Migraine Treatments During Pregnancy

Most of the medications that are used to treat migraine are not safe to take during pregnancy. If you are having frequent or severe migraines you may want to talk to your doctor about getting you a referral to see a neurologist.

Take a cold shower

The cold temperature will help to shrink dilated blood vessels.

Use an ice pack or cold compress.

You can put it on the back of your neck or on your forehead to help constrict the blood vessels.

Lay in dark room

Many people are sensitive to light during a migraine. Staying in a darkened room will help.

Sleep

Sometimes sleep is the only way to get rid of a migraine. If you have a really painful migraine it may be difficult to sleep but lying down and resting will help.

Massage your temples or sinuses.

Sometimes massaging your temple or your nasal bridge may relieve pain.

Get a good night's sleep.

Fatigue or not sleeping can sometimes trigger a migraine. Make sure you are well rested.

Avoid caffeine

Caffeine is not recommended during pregnancy and may trigger a migraine in some women.