

## Park Central OB/GYN Associates

### DEALING WITH THE DISCOMFORTS OF PREGNANCY

#### FATIGUE

During the first trimester, women are often more tired. We suggest going to bed earlier or trying to take a nap during the day. Fatigue lessens in the second trimester; but, in general, most patients need additional rest during pregnancy.

#### LEG CRAMPS

A cramped muscle is best relieved by stretching it, thus improving circulation. Stretching should be gentle and constant, not jerky. For foot cramps, stand on and stretch the effected foot. For calf cramps, straighten the knee, pull the foot toward the head, hold, and then relax. For cramps in the front of the thigh, stretch the leg backwards.

Never massage a cramped muscle, as it enhances rather than relieves the cramp, and may cause tenderness which can last for days. If pain persists, your leg should be examined for signs of a blood clot.

A change in diet high in calcium, or supplementing your diet with calcium may be of help to relieve these cramps.

#### FOOT PAIN

Relieved best by inverting or turning in your foot when walking barefoot to hold the arch up. Consider adding arch support inserts to existing shoes.

#### GROIN ACHE OR PAIN

This is commonly known as ROUND LIGAMENT PAIN, and may be relieved by small circular massage in the groin area, giving a slight lift as hands come upward. Do not use pressure on the down stroke. For relief of sudden spasm, pull the leg and knee up as if tying a shoe. Applying a heating pad may be of help. Avoid sudden movements such as with standing or sitting.

#### BACKACHE

Pay careful attention to correct posture. Pelvic rock on all fours may be of help. Kneel in a crawling position several times a day. When standing for a period of time, lift one foot and place it on an object so that it is higher than the other foot. You may also put one foot in front of the other and rock back and forth slightly. When sleeping, lie on your side with one knee bent. Do not wear high heels. A heating pad or warm shower may also give you some relief.

## FINGERS

If fingers become numb, tingling or swollen, relief may be obtained by wearing wrist splints or by placing your hands on your shoulders and rotating your elbows in a circle.

## DIAPHRAGM PRESSURE

This may feel like a cramp or stitch under your ribs. Try lifting your rib cage by raising your arms upward above your head, then stretching.

## SHORTNESS OF BREATH

Sleep with your head well propped up on a pillow. Try also spending the first ten minutes in bed lying on your back with your arms extended above your head and resting in that position. As your baby drops downward later in pregnancy, this will get better.

## HEMORRHOIDS

Follow the suggestions to relieve constipation. Avoid prolonged sitting. Regularly perform Kegel exercises, tightening the muscles of the rectum and vagina, to improve circulation. Apply cold compresses with ice, Witch Hazel, or Epsom salts.

## DIZZINESS, FAINTING, OR LIGHTHEADEDNESS

Avoid sudden changes in posture. After lying down, get up slowly, roll to side, and then push up to a sitting position using your arms. Avoid standing or lying flat on your back for long periods of time. Don't skip meals, eating smaller snacks between main meals. Avoid hot, stuffy rooms. Follow your doctor's advice if you are anemic (low blood count; low iron). Wear support stockings, and exercise calves daily.

## VARICOSE VEINS

Avoid thigh high hose or garters, or any clothing that causes pressure on the legs. Change positions frequently. Avoid prolonged standing or sitting. Take long walks stimulating circulation. Crawl on hands and knees several times a day. Be sure knees are flexed and supported by pillows. Wear support hose. Never stand at attention with knees locked. They should be flexed slightly.

## FREQUENT URINATION

This is normal in the first trimester as pressure increases on the bladder from the growing uterus, or late in pregnancy as the baby's head presses on the bladder. Pain with urination is NOT normal and should be checked by your doctor if this occurs.