

Having Migraine Headaches during Pregnancy

Women who suffer with migraine headaches may notice that their migraines occur more frequently and last longer during pregnancy. This is caused by the changes in hormone levels during pregnancy. Often, the migraines improve as you get closer to the end of pregnancy.

What can I do to prevent migraines?

The following suggestions can help prevent migraines:

- Eat regular meals and stay well hydrated.
- Avoid stress.
- Avoid “trigger” foods - nitrates, MSG, aged cheeses, chocolate, Nutrasweet (aspartame).
- Avoid all alcohol during pregnancy. Drinking can be harmful to your baby and trigger migraines (especially red wine and beer).
- Try to go to bed and get up at regular times. Be sure and get enough sleep.
- Exercise regularly.

If your migraines are particularly frequent and severe, your neurologist and/or OB care provider may prescribe a preventative medication. Take this as recommended.

How will I care for myself once the aura or headache has started?

- Take 2 Tylenol Extra Strength tablets (total 1000mg acetaminophen) as soon as possible.
- Try drinking a beverage with caffeine. This sometimes helps to stop the migraine.
- Rest in a dark, quiet, cool room. Try cool compresses or ice to forehead.
- Massage and biofeedback techniques may be helpful.

If your migraines are particularly severe, your neurologist and/or prenatal care provider may have prescribed a pain medication that is stronger. Take this as recommended.

Never drive during an aura or a migraine or if taking medication that makes you sleepy.

When should I call my health care provider?

Call your prenatal health care provider or Triage (734) 764-8134 if any of the following occurs:

- You've tried the suggestions above and the migraine is getting worse.
- You develop “new” migraine symptoms like one-sided weakness or numbness, or slurred speech.
- Sudden onset of ‘worst headache of life’
- Headache with fever
- Headache with altered mental status, seizures, changes in vision.
- You are vomiting and can't keep down any fluids for 12 hours or longer.
- The baby is not moving (after 24 weeks gestation).

We may see you in Triage or recommend that you go to the Emergency Department if you have symptoms such as numbness or slurred speech.

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