

## Heartburn

- Avoid large fatty meals and very spicy or 'windy' foods (onion, cabbage, beans).
- Use an extra pillow at night and try not to eat just before sleeping.
- Avoid coffee, chocolate, cola drinks and alcohol.
- Try drinking fluids between meals or before food, not after food.

## Dental care

- Poor teeth that need dental care can cause pain and ongoing infection. It can be one reason you feel unwell or don't eat well. During pregnancy hormone changes may mean your gums are softer and get infected more easily.
- Brush your teeth more often with a soft toothbrush and fluoride toothpaste.
- Other suggestions:
  - Rinse your mouth with tap water after vomiting or if you can't use a toothbrush as tap water contains flouride.
  - Clean your teeth at a time of day you feel well and not nauseous.
  - Avoid too many sweet lollies and drinks.
  - Visit a dentist while pregnant, don't wait until you have the baby. If you need help to arrange this please ask your health professional.
  - See also the brochure *Dental Health for people taking methadone*

**Always ask for advice before taking medication when pregnant. This includes vitamins, laxatives and herbal remedies.**

## Contact details

Women's Alcohol and Drug Service  
 8.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday  
 L1, 313 Cardigan Street Victoria 3053 (03) 8345 3931  
 Email: [wads@thewomens.org.au](mailto:wads@thewomens.org.au)  
 Website: [www.thewomens.org.au/alcoholdrugservice](http://www.thewomens.org.au/alcoholdrugservice)  
 After hours assistance  
 RWH emergency department (03) 8345 3636

## Other important numbers

Drug info line  
 for written information  
 and resources 1300 858 584

Direct Line  
 for counselling  
 and referral (24/7) Free Call – 1800 888 236

The Royal Women's Hospital (03) 8345 2000

The Royal Women's Hospital  
 Young Women's Program (03) 8345 2127  
 Website: [www.ypp.org.au](http://www.ypp.org.au)

YSAS (Youth Substance Abuse Service) (03) 9418 1020

Women's Health Information Centre  
 Free information about  
 a range of women's health issues  
 Melbourne callers (03) 8345 3045  
 Rural/country callers 1800 442 007 (free call)  
 Email: [whic@thewomens.org.au](mailto:whic@thewomens.org.au)



# Healthy pregnancy hints

Advice for pregnant women using drugs or alcohol

This information is provided to help you have a comfortable pregnancy

## Constipation

- High levels of hormones, pressure from the growing baby and certain medications like iron tablets or methadone may lead to constipation.



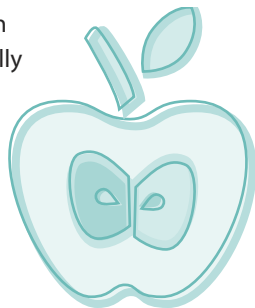
- A stressful or unstable lifestyle can lead to an irregular bowel habit and constipation.
- Constipation is uncomfortable and can add to nausea or decrease your appetite. It can also lead to haemorrhoids.

## Treatment for constipation

Sometimes laxatives are needed but different products work in different ways. Depending on the reasons for your constipation, you may need help to work out which is best for you. Remember to consult staff for advice or, if in doubt, speak to a pharmacist or ring the RWH Drug Information Service on (03) 9344 2277.

### Laxatives regarded as 'safe' during pregnancy

- Try a fibre supplement like psyllium husk or Metamucil but they need a few days to work so keep taking them regularly. Drink plenty of water when taking these.
- Stool softeners, eg. coloxyl (not coloxyl with senna though). These may be needed initially to start your bowel working but should be replaced with the above fibres.
- Lactulose, eg. Actilax, Duphalac
- Glycerin suppositories



### Natural alternatives such as herbal laxatives

- If it doesn't specify on the label as being safe for pregnancy, don't take the product, even if it is from a well-known company. Natural products are not necessarily safe in pregnancy.

### Haemorrhoids during pregnancy

- It is common for pregnant women to suffer from haemorrhoids, especially as a result of constipation. Always check with your doctor if there is any bleeding associated with your haemorrhoids or bowel movements.

**Never take laxatives during pregnancy without first checking for their safety. Always ask first before taking anything when pregnant. Ask your doctor, midwife or dietitian about symptoms that bother you.**

## Dietary and lifestyle management

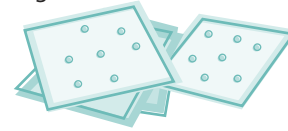
- Increase your fibre intake. Fibre is the roughage in plant food that adds bulk and holds water to soften your stools. Include fruit, vegetable and cereal foods. Try dried fruits, prunes, corn, nuts, leaving skins on vegetables, high fibre breakfast cereals and wholemeal breads, baked beans, oat or wheat bran. If you have bran make sure you drink plenty of water.
- Drink whenever you are thirsty. Have mainly water, then milk and fruit juice, not just tea, coffee and cola drinks.
- Eat regularly. Having food every few hours helps stimulate the bowel to work well. Chew well, eat slowly and enjoy your food.
- Go to the toilet regularly. Don't push or strain as this may cause other problems like haemorrhoids.
- Be active and exercise gently and regularly. Gentle stretching exercises or yoga can also help.



- Remember to drink plenty of fluid. Most people need eight glasses a day – mostly water, then milk or fruit juice
- Some iron tablets can make constipation worse. Check your tablets with a health professional.
- If you have any further questions ask for help and advice from a dietician.

## Morning sickness

- Drink plenty of fluid. Dehydration makes nausea worse.
- Before getting out of bed, try eating a dry biscuit or have a light snack during the night.



- Eat small amounts of food at a time. Snack every few hours over the day and don't go for prolonged periods without food.
- If hungry, don't overeat or have too many fatty or spicy foods.
- Stay away from strong smells. Try cold foods like sandwiches instead.
- Make the most of times that you feel like eating.
- Ask for more advice when next having a pregnancy check-up. If you are not gaining any weight, talk to a health professional.
- If you are taking methadone, eat something half an hour before your dose and rest afterwards until nausea has settled. Change your dose to a time when you are less sick. Speak to your doctor if your nausea has not settled.

