



Headaches

Headaches are common in early pregnancy due to relaxation of blood vessels in the brain by the hormone, progesterone. Tiredness, anxiety and stress, “morning sickness” or eyesight problems increase the frequency or severity. It is safe to take one or two mild pain-relieving tablets, but check with your midwife if you are not sure.

In later pregnancy, headaches may be due to pre-eclampsia or high blood pressure – always report headaches to your midwife, especially if they are worst in the front of your head and over your eyes. Headaches in the nape of your neck are more commonly associated with dehydration – so drink plenty of water.

Tips for coping with headaches

- Drink plenty of water – if you become dehydrated, your headache will be worse.
- Avoid chocolate, cheese, coffee, tea, alcohol, cola and processed foods, additives and preservatives.
- Eat regularly to avoid your blood sugar dropping
- Find time for yourself – 10 minutes every day doing something you want to do, not something you have to do.
- Rest in a cool room with dim lighting
- Soak in a warm (not hot) bath
- Get fresh air and gentle exercise
- Yoga, tai chi or relaxation techniques may help.
- Do gentle neck and head exercises, by slowly rotating your head to one side as far as you can, returning it to the mid-line and repeating in the opposite

direction. Lift your shoulders and then allow them to drop down as far away as possible from the level of your ears; slowly lift and stretch one arm, circle forwards then backwards, lower and repeat with the other arm.

- Aromatherapy – one drop each of lavender and peppermint essential oil rubbed gently into your temples.
- Avoid Tiger balm as there is no evidence regarding its safety in pregnancy
- Bach flower remedies - olive to ease weariness, impatiens if you are irritable, or Rescue Remedy for general stress
- Massage your temples and other points where the headache seems to be particularly focused, or do a head massage, using a hair- washing movement. Indian Head massage is also good.
- Reflexology can be useful
- Hypnotherapy may suit you, especially if your headaches are tension-related
- Osteopathy, chiropractic and acupuncture are good if you constantly suffer headaches or migraine

Some homeopathic remedies which may be useful for headaches

Try SEPIA if you

- have pain on the left side and over your left eye which is shooting, throbbing & in waves
- feel worse if you bend down, or when travelling
- are icy cold, especially the extremities
- feel better after eating & in the fresh air
- have a feeling of ambivalence, are intolerant, impatient & confused

Try CHAMOMILLA if you

- can't stand the slightest pain
- feel as if your head is pulsating and tearing apart
- feel worse if you drink coffee, eat sweets or smoke
- feel better if you eat and change position
- feel irrationally angry out of all proportion to the severity of the headache

Try BELLADONNA if you

- have a pounding headache
- feel worse with jarring movement of any type
- are pregnant during the summer months

- feel better in the morning, worse in the afternoon
- are nervous, restless & fearful

Try **ACONITE** if you

- have a throbbing bursting type of headache
- develop a headache suddenly, especially after a shock
- are worse when you are cold or have cold drinks
- feel better when resting or in the open air
- are irritable and very sensitive to the pain

Always inform your midwife if you are using any natural remedies or receiving treatment from a complementary therapist

For more individualised advice on coping with headaches, call Expectancy on **0906 400 6227** (calls charged at £1.50 per minute, from a BT landline; calls from mobiles and other networks may vary)