

Acupuncture can ease nausea, back pain, digestion problems and more.



 **Safe & soothing**  
Chamomile tea is OK; other types can be dangerous.

Center for Women's Health in Stamford, Conn., and author of *The Whole Pregnancy Handbook* (2005).

Next, explore your options. As with all medicines, "It's best to start with food and lifestyle changes, and use herbs and other remedies last," says Morgan Martin, N.D., L.M., chairwoman of the Naturopathic Midwifery Department at Bastyr University in Kenmore, Wash. For example, exercise can do wonders for constipation and insomnia. Massage and acupuncture can also ease many ills, but only consult licensed practitioners who have experience treating pregnant women.

The following remedies, available at natural foods stores or online, are all safe and effective during pregnancy; regardless, always tell your doctor or midwife what you're taking. You'll also find remedies that might ordinarily be safe but should be avoided for now. And, of course, exercise extra caution in your first trimester.

## Say no to drugs

Safe natural remedies and smart lifestyle changes can ease your pregnancy complaints.

**IF NAUSEA, HEARTBURN OR** other annoying symptoms are plaguing your pregnancy, you might turn first to natural remedies, assuming they're safer than prescription or even over-the-counter options. But that's not necessarily true. Certain herbs, for example, can cause uterine contractions that could lead to preterm labor.

You also shouldn't be in a rush to self-medicate. "Have your symptoms evaluated by an obstetrician before you try to treat them yourself, to make sure what you're experiencing isn't a sign of something serious," advises OB-GYN Joel M. Evans, M.D., founder of The

### Morning sickness

- ▶ Eat small meals and snacks throughout the day to keep food in your stomach.
- ▶ Wear acupressure wristbands (such as Psi Bands), which stimulate acupressure points.
- ▶ Prenatal vitamins can exacerbate nausea; take yours with food or at night so you can sleep through the side effects. Or try prescription liquid vitamins instead.
- ▶ Take powdered ginger capsules (250 milligrams up to three times daily); drink 4 ounces of fresh ginger tea (peel, slice thin and simmer in 8 ounces of hot water) two to three times a day; mix 5 milliliters of ginger tincture with enough water to fill a 1-ounce bottle; take five to 10 drops up to six or seven times a day; or suck on candied ginger or drink brewed ginger ale.
- ▶ Drink up to four 8-ounce cups a day of chamomile, peppermint or raspberry leaf tea. Use



*did you know?* An acupuncture technique known as moxibustion can turn babies who are in a breech position. It's most effective at weeks 32-34.



## Herbal helper >

Peppermint tea can ease the queasies.

tea bags or steep 2 teaspoons of the herb in 8 ounces of hot water for two to three minutes, then strain.

**Avoid:** Herbs that contain volatile (essential) oils can be dangerous during pregnancy; use them sparingly and topically only. In general, only use herbs in a dilute form, such as tea.

### Heartburn

- > Avoid spicy or acidic foods.
- > Eat small meals frequently and slowly throughout the day.
- > Chew a parsley sprig after eating.
- > Chew fennel seeds or steep 4 tablespoons of the seeds in 1 quart of water, then strain.
- > Suck on slippery elm bark lozenges or mix the powdered herb with water, juice or milk. To make tea, use bags or pour 8 ounces of hot water over 1 teaspoon of slippery elm powder. Drink up to four 8-ounces cups a day.
- > Take two deglycerated licorice root capsules after each meal and two before bedtime.

**Avoid:** Don't use slippery elm powder for more than 14 consecutive days. Don't take medications like Zantac without consulting your doctor.

### Constipation

- > Get 25-30 grams of fiber daily from fruits, vegetables, legumes (beans and peas) and whole grains.
- > Drink up to 8 ounces of water or clear fluids (like herbal teas or broth) every hour.
- > Sprinkle ground flaxseed on cereal, salads, etc.
- > Take probiotics.
- > Try psyllium powder, such as Metamucil, or flaxseed.

**Avoid:** Mineral oil or herbs that cause a laxative effect by irritating the colon (such as senna or cascara sagrada); both can stimulate uterine contractions.

### Swelling/bloating

- > Sit when you can with your feet elevated and gently massage your legs. Drape a cloth saturated with chilled

- witch hazel over your feet.
  - > Wear support hose if you stand a lot.
  - > Stay hydrated.
  - > Avoid processed foods containing a lot of sodium.
  - > Steep ½ teaspoon each of parsley leaf and dandelion leaf in 8 ounces of boiling water for five minutes and drink once or twice a day.
  - > Eat raw cucumbers or dandelion greens or sauté the greens with garlic and olive oil; all are gentle diuretics.
- Avoid:** Over-the-counter diuretics.

### Insomnia

- > Eat a late-night snack with protein to keep blood sugar levels steady throughout the night.
  - > Sleep with pillows under your abdomen or between your legs.
  - > Sprinkle lavender and rose petals or essential oils into a warm bath before bed, or keep something lavender-scented by your bed.
  - > Drink relaxing herbal teas like Sleepytime, or make a tea from linden flower, rose petals, chamomile, lemon balm and lavender (mix 1 tablespoon of each in a container, steep 1 teaspoon of mix in boiling water).
- Avoid:** Prescription or OTC sedatives; check with your doctor or midwife before using valerian.

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## Read more

- **Herbs for Women's Health** by Mary Bove, N.D. (1997)
- **The Natural Pregnancy Book: Herbs, Nutrition and Other Holistic Choices** by Aviva Jill Romm (2003)
- **Mothering Magazine's Having a Baby, Naturally** by Peggy O'Mara (2003)



↑ Get healthy! For more, go to [fitpregnancy.com/health](http://fitpregnancy.com/health).