

Avoiding Heartburn During Pregnancy

Heartburn during pregnancy can get very uncomfortable. Here are some helpful tips for keeping it at bay. ■ WORDS **CINDY LIM**

Feel an uncomfortable sensation around your chest area, especially after meals or when lying down? You could be suffering from heartburn.

“Heartburn is a burning sensation that usually happens around the chest area due to the acid reflux into the oesophagus. It occurs due to the hormonal changes during pregnancy and the physical pressure of the growing baby on the stomach,” explains dietitian Janice Chong, Mount Alvernia Hospital.

Feeling the Burn

Heartburn usually begins in the first or second trimester and continues throughout the remainder of the pregnancy. Progesterone, the hormone that relaxes muscles during pregnancy, causes the valve between the stomach and oesophagus to be lax too. This results in stomach acid passing back into the oesophagus.

During the third trimester, the expanding uterus puts pressure on the intestines and stomach which may also push contents back up into the oesophagus. “While heartburn is common during pregnancy, mothers expecting twins or even triplets are more likely to experience heartburn due to the additional pressure on the stomach. Heartburn usually disappears after the baby is born,” says Chong.

Dealing with Heartburn

Here are some ways to douse that burning flame and to avoid heartburn without hurting your baby:

- ✓ Take small and frequent meals instead of large main meals
- ✓ Eat slowly and chew your food properly
- ✓ Avoid consuming large amounts of fluids while eating as this may increase the risk of acid reflux and heartburn
- ✓ Identify and cut out the foods that trigger your heartburn, such as acidic foods (citrus fruits, coffee), oily/fatty or fried foods, spicy food and gassy drinks
- ✓ Stay hydrated by consuming sips of fluids between meals
- ✓ Avoid lying down directly after a meal. Try to sit upright or inclined at an angle. Wait about an hour after eating to lie down
- ✓ Sleeping on your left side (it is more difficult for acid to reflux into the oesophagus) and not eating for a few hours before bedtime except for a cup of milk may help
- ✓ Avoid wearing tight-fitting clothes, especially around the stomach and chest area

- ✓ If you are experiencing heartburn, try eating some yoghurt or drinking a glass of milk

Consult your doctor before using antacids and over-the-counter medications to cope with the discomfort as some antacids contain aluminium, which is not considered safe for pregnancy. [m](#)

