



Center for Women's Health

For Your Information - Part IV

At about this time in your pregnancy, the 22nd week, your baby is approximately 12 inches long and weighs 1-1/2 pounds. Eyebrows and eyelashes are visible and head hair is forming. Your baby's face is wrinkled and somewhat like an old man in appearance and his or her skin is red, shiny and thin.

About the third month of your pregnancy the amount of blood (blood volume) in your body begins to increase in order to provide for your baby. Because of this increase in blood volume a number of circulation changes occur that may cause concern or discomfort.

These normal circulation changes may cause dizziness or faintness. Sudden movement, standing for a long time, or being in a warm, crowded area can bring on a feeling of faintness. Some pregnant women feel faint if they go without eating for several hours. If the faint feeling is strong, try lying down, sitting, squatting or lowering your head to bring relief.

The increased volume of your blood can also cause nasal and sinus stuffiness, nosebleeds, voice changes, and/or a sensation of fullness in the ears. Swelling of veins in your rectum called hemorrhoids or in your legs or vulva, called vulvar varicosities, can occur. Drinking plenty of fluids and increasing fresh fruits and vegetables to avoid constipation will help to prevent hemorrhoids. Kegel exercises may help control vulvar varicosities. Soaking in warm water and/or applying gauze soaked in witch hazel will relieve discomfort. Support hose will help prevent or limit size and discomfort of varicose veins in your legs. Avoid wearing clothes that bind or constrict, avoid standing for long periods, and when resting elevate legs and hips or lie on your left side. Consider doing some leg exercises to assist in blood circulation to relieve the discomfort of varicose veins.

Edema, or swelling in your lower legs and hands, can be a normal, though bothersome, change. This is usually as a result of your increasing blood volume and your enlarging uterus. You can help reduce this swelling by lying on your left side, particularly at night. This position helps blood and fluid return to your heart and also improves circulation to your kidneys, which is why swelling decreases at night and why you need to urinate more frequently at night. Adequate fluid and protein intake and limiting salt intake will help reduce edema. **However, if edema is accompanied by a severe headache, vision changes, or swelling in the face, please notify the office.**

Some of the swelling that leaves your feet at night may just move to your hands and wrists. This edema may cause compression of the median nerve beneath the carpal ligament of the wrist which causes pain in the hand and may radiate to the elbow and be accompanied by burning, tingling, or numbness. This is called carpal tunnel syndrome. It is usually most noticeable at night and may even cause you to awake and shake your hands. Carpal tunnel syndrome usually disappears after delivery of your baby. Elevation of hands at night on pillows may help. If symptoms are severe, wrist splinting or further evaluation may be needed.

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It is common to feel short of breath while at rest or with slight exertion. You may find yourself sighing more and taking deep breaths. These are due to respiratory changes and your increased oxygen needs. Good posture, sitting upright, and breathing deeply and slowly until the feeling passes will help.

Palpitations or a "racing" heartbeat may occur. Due to increased blood volume your heart has to work harder. It is regularly beating at a more rapid rate but may occasionally "race." If palpitations occur frequently, or last more than one minute, please notify the office.

This is a good time to sign up for your **hospital tour** as well as the **prenatal education classes: *Self-Care, Infant Care, Breast Feeding*** and ***Pain Management***. These classes are not required but may help you get ready for birth and prepare you to take care of your baby and yourself after delivery. You may sign up for any, or all of these, by calling "the St. Joe Referral Line" at (734) 712-5400 or (800) 231-2211. These classes are especially helpful for first time moms. The tour will allow you an opportunity to see the delivery area and speak with a labor and delivery nurse.