

9055 - Working During Pregnancy: Do's and Don'ts



Most women can continue working during pregnancy. Being pregnant, however, may present challenges at the workplace. To stay healthy and productive on the job, understand how to alleviate common pregnancy discomforts — and know when work tasks might jeopardize your pregnancy.

Easing nausea and vomiting

It may be called "morning" sickness, but pregnancy queasiness can hit at any time. To ease nausea at work:

- **Avoid nausea triggers.** That double latte you craved every morning before pregnancy or the smell of foods reheated in the break room microwave may now make your stomach flip-flop. Steer clear of anything that triggers nausea.
- **Snack often.** Crackers and other bland foods can be lifesavers when you feel nauseated. Keep a stash at work for easy snacking. Ginger ale or ginger tea may help, too.
- **Drink plenty of fluids.** If you don't drink enough fluids, your nausea may get worse. Keep a water bottle at your desk or in your work area and sip throughout the day.
- **Take it slow in the morning.** Allow yourself extra time to get out of bed and get ready for work. Rushing around can contribute to nausea.

Handling fatigue

You may feel tired as your body works overtime to support your pregnancy — and resting during the workday can be tough. It may help to:

- **Eat foods rich in iron and protein.** Fatigue can be a symptom of iron deficiency anemia, but adjusting your diet can help. Choose foods such as red meat, poultry, seafood, leafy green vegetables, whole-grain cereal and pasta, beans, nuts, and seeds.
- **Take short, frequent breaks.** Getting up and moving around for a few minutes can reinvigorate you. Spending a few minutes with the lights off, your eyes closed and your feet up also can help you recharge.
- **Cut back on activities.** Scaling back can help you get more rest when your workday ends. Consider doing your shopping online or hiring someone to clean the house or take care of the yard.
- **Keep up your fitness routine.** Although exercise may be the last thing on your mind at the end of a long day, physical activity may help boost your energy level — especially if you sit at a desk all day. Take a walk after work or join a prenatal fitness class, as long as your health care provider says it's OK.
- **Go to bed early.** Aim for seven to nine hours of sleep every night. Resting on your left side will improve blood flow to your baby and help prevent swelling. Placing pillows between your legs and under your belly may increase your comfort.

As your pregnancy progresses, everyday activities such as sitting and standing can become uncomfortable. Remember those short, frequent breaks to combat fatigue? Moving around every few hours can also ease muscle tension and help prevent fluid build up in your legs and feet. Try these other strategies, too:

- **Sitting.** Adjustable armrests, a firm seat and back cushions, and good lower back support can make long hours of sitting much easier — especially as your weight and posture change. If your chair isn't adjustable, improvise. Use a small pillow or cushion to provide extra support for your back.
- **Standing.** Prolonged standing can cause blood to pool in your legs, which may lead to pain or dizziness. It also puts pressure on your back. If you must stand for long periods of time, put one



of your feet up on a footrest, low stool or box. Switch feet every so often, and take frequent breaks. Wear comfortable shoes with good arch support. Consider wearing support hose, too.

- **Bending and lifting.** Proper form can spare your back, even if you're lifting something light. Bend at your knees, not your waist. Keep the load close to your body, lifting with your legs — not your back. Avoid twisting your body while lifting. Ask for help when lifting heavy objects.

Keeping stress under control

Stress on the job can inspire you to push hard, but it can also sap the energy you need to care for yourself and your baby. To minimize workplace stress:

- **Take control.** Make daily to-do lists and prioritize your tasks. Consider what you can delegate to someone else — or eliminate.
- **Talk it out.** Share frustrations with a supportive co-worker, friend or loved one.
- **Relax.** Practice relaxation techniques, such as breathing slowly or imagining yourself in a calm place. Or try a prenatal yoga class, as long as your health care provider says it's OK.

Taking proper job precautions

Certain working conditions may increase your risk of complications during pregnancy — especially if you're at high risk of preterm labor — including:

- Exposure to harmful substances
- Excessive working hours
- Prolonged standing
- Heavy lifting
- Excessive noise
- Heavy vibrations, such as from large machines
- High stress

Activities that require agility and good balance may become more difficult later in pregnancy.

If you're concerned about any of these issues, mention it to your health care provider. Together you can decide if you need to take special precautions or modify your work duties during your pregnancy.

Source: Mayo Clinic