

PHYSICAL CONCERNS IN PREGNANCY

It feels like my baby has hiccups. Is this OK?

You're probably right. **Hiccups are very common** in the fetus and are **harmless**. They often feel like very rhythmic quick movements of the baby. Some babies get hiccups often or for hours at a time.

Hiccups are of **no concern**. Babies often continue to experience **hiccups after birth**.

My ankles are swollen. When is this a concern? What can I do about it?

Ankle and calf swelling are very common in pregnancy. This is caused by a combination of many normal physiological changes in pregnancy.

Rarely, this can be due to a **blood clot deep in the muscles** (DVT). If you note the swelling in one leg is much more than the other, or it is noticeably painful, it is very important to notify your physician urgently, as this may be a sign of a blood clot.

Helpful hints for coping with the normal swelling associated with pregnancy include:

- Minimizing prolonged periods of standing or sitting
- **Elevating your legs** periodically throughout the day
- **Exercising regularly** such as walking or swimming
- Using **compression stockings**

What is round ligament pain?

The round ligaments that support the growing uterus during pregnancy, extend from the uterus to the labia. Round ligament pain is **sudden, sharp, brief pain in the lower abdomen** radiating to the groin. It is often brought on by sudden movements such as rolling over in bed.

Symptoms often begin in the **second trimester** and can **persist until delivery**.

Treatment can include:

- Rest
- Modification in movements or position (for example, minimizing sudden movements, supporting the growing uterus with your hands when moving and bending forward at the waist to avoid pain)
- Tylenol
- Hot compresses

Contact your physician if you experience: **severe pain** or **uterine cramping, pelvic pressure** that does not resolve with rest, **bleeding** or **spotting, fever, chills** or **painful urination**.

What are picket fence pains?

Picket fence pains are **brief, sharp, stabbing pains** felt in the **vagina**.

Symptoms start in the **third trimester**.

They are thought to be caused by normal changes of the cervix, in preparation for labour.

Contact your physician if you experience: **severe pain** or **uterine cramping**, **pelvic pressure** that does not resolve with rest, **bleeding** or **spotting**, **fever**, **chills** or **painful urination**.

What can I do about the leg cramps I am experiencing?

Leg cramps are a common symptom in pregnancy, often occurring in the **lower legs** in the latter half of pregnancy and **most commonly at night**.

To prevent cramps we recommend that you:

- **Stay well hydrated**
- **Take enough calcium** and **magnesium**, often by using an over-the-counter supplement
- **Avoid stretching** with your **toes pointed downwards**, this can trigger a cramp

When a cramp occurs try **stretching your toes** and **feet upwards**, as well as using **massage** and **warmth** (shower, bath, hot pack).