



# STRESS... During Pregnancy

---

*Even an uncomplicated pregnancy can result in some stress during pregnancy. Stress is unfortunately a common and ordinary side effect of living. Stress can however be particularly harmful during pregnancy, thus it is important that you work to reduce your stress and anxiety levels during pregnancy as much as possible.*

## Negative Effects of Stress During Pregnancy

There are many negative side effects of stress during pregnancy. Studies show that very high levels of stress may contribute to an increased risk of premature delivery or low birth weight babies. Still other studies suggest that overly high stress levels can increase your heart rate, blood pressure and produce chronic anxiety. None of these side effects are good for your baby. Remember that just as what you eat affects your baby, so too does your stress level and your emotional health. It is important that you minimize your stress and anxiety during pregnancy to provide your baby with an optimal environment in which to grow.

## How To Manage Stress During Pregnancy

Stress doesn't have to be bad especially when you take care to manage the stress you experience during your pregnancy. Stress management includes caring for yourself, feeling rested and regularly finding healthy outlets to relieve stress and anxiety. Most women will not suffer any ill effects from stress during pregnancy, especially when they take adequate steps to cope with their stress.

Here are some easy tips you can follow to help reduce and manage your stress during pregnancy. You can even adopt many of these tips after pregnancy to ensure your stress level remains manageable after delivery.

1. Eat a healthy, well balanced diet. Eating well will provide you the energy you need to get through the day, especially when you feel tired or overworked. The more junk food you eat the more stressed your body will be. Your body needs ample nutrients to cope with daily stress.
2. Get plenty of sleep. The less sleep you get the more stressed you are likely to be. If you find you are having trouble sleeping invest in a comfortable body pillow, some new sheets and even a white noise machine to help block out outside noises and help promote more restful sleep. You may find it helpful to take a relaxing bath before bed. Also avoid eating up to one hour before bed to prevent heartburn, which can disrupt your sleep and increase your level of stress.
3. Exercise regularly. Exercise is an ideal way to help cope with daily stressors. It will also leave you feeling more energetic and ready to tackle the day's challenges. Some women find that exercising after work helps provide them the time they need to wind down and distress from their day at work. Exercise can also help ease labor and alleviate some of the anxiety associated with the upcoming labor and delivery.
4. Try some natural stress reduction techniques including biofeedback, yoga or meditation. Each of these methods is a non interventionist way to help you focus, identify stressors and release stress in a healthy, safe and energy producing manner.
5. Talk regularly with your partner. Your partner can help you work through your anxiety and help comfort you in times of high stress. By communicating regularly and openly with your partner you are bound to feel more prepared to deal with the challenges each day will bring.
6. Reduce your workload. If you find you are doing too much in a day find ways to delegate certain tasks to others. Carrying a baby for nine months is a lot of work. You should expect that those around you will be willing to take on more responsibility to help you out in your time of need.

If you find you are overly stressing about labor and delivery, be sure to talk with your health care provider. Nine times out of ten they can help put your fears to rest and help restore your confidence in your ability to give birth and your enthusiasm for delivery.