



Is sleep important when you are pregnant?

Pregnancy is a time when you need to pay particular attention to your health. During pregnancy, the mother's body changes rapidly. Any health issues may impact on the development and growth of the baby. Most people know that you need a balanced diet and enough exercise, but having enough sleep is vital as well. Many pregnant women feel tired. This is most common in the first few months of pregnancy and again towards the end of pregnancy. This means that women will often need to spend more time resting or sleeping.

How does sleep change during pregnancy?

Along with the changes to the body that occur during pregnancy, there are also changes in sleep patterns. These are quite normal. As the pregnancy progresses, women have less deep sleep and wake up more often during the night. Sleep is less refreshing, which is why expectant mothers should spend more time in bed asleep. Sometimes an afternoon nap of an hour or two will help.

Is snoring linked with pregnancy?

You may start to snore during pregnancy. You don't need to worry about this if it only occurs occasionally. But if it occurs often, is very loud or interrupts sleep, you should

Important Things to Know About Pregnancy and Sleep

- Having enough good sleep when you're pregnant is important for both you and your baby.
- If you're pregnant, you don't sleep as deeply and may wake up during the night. This means that you need to spend more time in bed.
- This is especially so in the last three months of pregnancy.
- If you start snoring while you're pregnant, or stop breathing during sleep, you should speak with a doctor about it. It may be a sign of other medical problems that may affect your health and also that of your growing baby.

Speak to your doctor or midwife. Snoring during pregnancy may indicate breathing problems during the night. Sometimes mothers who start snoring have also developed high blood pressure. For the health of both you and your baby, you need to look into this.

Are breathing pauses during sleep normal in pregnancy?

It is normal to have very occasional breathing pauses during the night, whether or not you are pregnant. However they may become more frequent and noticeable during pregnancy. Sometimes these breathing pauses end with a snore or gasping. The sleep disruption may cause excessive sleepiness during the day. If you or your partner have noticed breathing pauses, you should mention it to your doctor.

Are leg movements linked with pregnancy?

As pregnancy proceeds, some women (or their partners) notice that they move their legs a lot just at the time that they go to sleep. There may be small jerks and kicks, or there may be quite large movements that keep going all through the night. If this gets in the way of sleep, you should see a doctor to treat it. The symptoms usually get

much better or go away after the baby is born. See our page on [Periodic Limb Movements During Sleep](#). Some mothers-to-be also experience [Restless Legs Syndrome](#).

How may sleep disorders affect the health of the mother?

Breathing pauses, snoring and other sleep disorders can increase the health risks of pregnancy to the mother. This may include high blood pressure, diabetes or even pre-eclampsia. Mothers who don't have enough sleep may feel anxious and depressed. This may persist after the baby is born. Acting on these problems early helps simplify treatment. See [Depression and Sleep](#) and [Anxiety and Sleep](#).

How may sleep disorders affect the health of the developing baby?

The baby might not grow normally if the mother has health problems such as high blood pressure or diabetes. If the mother has breathing pauses and variable oxygen levels during the night, the baby might be smaller and not be as healthy at the time of birth.

How can I improve my sleep during pregnancy?

Most expectant mothers need more sleep than usual and should try to optimise the quality of their sleep while they are pregnant. You should follow the simple tips in our [Good Sleep Habits](#) page. Sleep may be particularly bad

during the third trimester. In these last 2 or 3 months, women often have frequent trips to the toilet at night, indigestion, leg movements or discomfort from the pregnant belly. There are some simple things to do that can help each of these problems:

- To manage indigestion, raising the head of the bed or sleeping on more pillows is helpful. Antacids may be used, but in moderation.
- To reduce the number of toilet trips during the night, be sure to go to the toilet just before going to bed and avoid drinking too much in the evening.
- If moving your legs during sleep is a problem, you should reduce the amount of tea, coffee and other caffeine drinks that you have. This may help.
- Obstetricians and midwives usually suggest that women try to sleep on their side during the later months of pregnancy. This may lessen discomfort and also help with the healthy growth of the baby.
- If there is loud, frequent snoring or breathing pauses, discuss this with your doctor. Sometimes a sleep study may need to be done.

Women should look after their health to have a healthy baby. Sleep is one of the three pillars of health - you need to have a good diet, moderate exercise and enough sleep.

Where can I find out more?

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/article/sleep-topics/pregnancy-and-sleep>

<http://www.sleepdex.org/pregnancy.htm>

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The peak national association of clinicians and scientists devoted to investigation of sleep and its disorders

Disclaimer - Information provided here is general in nature and should not be seen as a substitute for professional medical advice. Ongoing concerns about sleep or other medical conditions should be discussed with your local doctor.



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