

# Dealing with Pregnancy Fatigue: Causes, Tips, and Support



## Highlights

Fatigue is common in the first and third trimesters of pregnancy.

Persistent tiredness may indicate a health problem, and you should consult with your doctor or midwife.

Pregnancy can make it harder to get enough quality sleep.

Healthy eating, exercise, avoiding caffeine, and getting plenty of rest can help improve sleep.

From 28 weeks of pregnancy, it's important to sleep on your side, not your back.

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## Why Tiredness Is Common During Pregnancy

During the first trimester, feeling fatigued is common due to the changes in

your body. You may experience this tiredness as your body adjusts to hormonal changes, increased blood volume, and the beginning of your baby's development. For many, energy levels start improving after 14 weeks.

Later in pregnancy, fatigue may return, primarily because you're carrying more weight and possibly not sleeping as well. Changes in sleep patterns, physical discomfort, and emotional shifts can all contribute to feeling exhausted.

Some reasons pregnancy affects sleep include:

Sleep may not be as deep or restorative as usual.

You may wake up more often during the night, whether it's to use the bathroom or due to your baby's movements.

You might experience heartburn or discomfort when lying down.

Some people start snoring or notice pauses in their breathing while asleep.

Restless legs syndrome (RLS) is common during pregnancy, causing discomfort and an urge to move your legs.

Disturbing dreams can arise in late pregnancy, often linked to anxiety or stress.

### **Will Tiredness Affect My Baby?**

While tiredness itself is common during pregnancy, it can impact your ability to care for yourself and your baby. When fatigued, you might find it harder to eat well or exercise, which can affect both your health and your baby's development.

In some cases, persistent tiredness can be a symptom of other underlying health conditions that may affect you or your baby. For example:

**Anaemia:** Low iron levels can lead to fatigue, which is common in pregnancy as your body requires more iron to support both you and your growing baby.

**Sleep Apnoea:** Loud snoring or pauses in your breathing during sleep could indicate sleep apnoea, which increases the risk of conditions like high blood pressure. High blood pressure can affect the growth of your baby.

**Mental Health:** Difficulty sleeping or ongoing fatigue can sometimes signal anxiety or depression, both of which need to be addressed for your well-being and that of your baby.

## **When to See Your Doctor**

You should consult with your doctor or midwife if:

You're feeling exhausted, and resting doesn't improve your energy levels.  
You start snoring or notice pauses in your breathing during sleep.  
Your sleep is disturbed by issues like heartburn or restless legs syndrome.  
You're feeling anxious, depressed, or emotionally overwhelmed.

Make sure to attend regular antenatal appointments where your doctor or midwife can monitor your blood pressure, check for any complications, and address any concerns or questions.

## **How to Manage Tiredness**

It's important to rest as much as possible if you're feeling tired. Make sure to follow a healthy diet, and ask for help when you need it. You can reduce the physical load by sitting down when possible, like when folding laundry or cooking.

Here are some strategies to improve sleep:

Avoid drinking too much before bed to limit nighttime bathroom trips.  
Sleep on your side, particularly after 28 weeks of pregnancy. This position improves circulation and reduces the risk of complications.  
Engage in exercise during the day, but avoid doing so too close to bedtime to ensure it doesn't interfere with your sleep.  
Establish a relaxing pre-bedtime routine, such as reading or taking a warm bath.  
Use pillows for support: place them between your knees, behind your back, and under your abdomen for better comfort.  
If heartburn is an issue, sleep with your head elevated using pillows, or consult your doctor about medications that may help.  
For leg discomfort, reducing caffeine intake may help lessen restless legs syndrome.

For improving your energy levels:

During daily tasks, consider sitting or resting periodically, particularly when doing chores or activities that don't require constant movement.

Regular exercise during pregnancy can enhance your stamina and reduce tiredness.

Practice relaxation techniques to save energy and reduce unnecessary fatigue.

## **Tools and Assistance**

If you are experiencing persistent fatigue during pregnancy and find that resting doesn't help, there are several resources and strategies you can use to manage your tiredness and support your well-being.

**Pregnancy Support Groups:** Joining online or in-person groups can offer emotional support and allow you to share experiences with others who are going through similar challenges. Connecting with others can help you feel more supported and less isolated.

**Pelvic Floor Exercises:** Regular pelvic floor exercises can help improve circulation, reduce pressure on your bladder, and support the muscles needed to manage fatigue. Speak with your healthcare provider about starting these exercises safely during pregnancy.

**Nutritional Advice:** A balanced diet can help address fatigue by ensuring you are getting the right nutrients. You might want to consult an accredited dietitian or your doctor to help tailor a nutrition plan to your pregnancy needs.

**Rest and Sleep Techniques:** Creating a calming bedtime routine, such as reading a book or taking a warm bath, can help you relax and improve the quality of your sleep. Consider using pillows to support your body when sleeping on your side, especially during the later stages of pregnancy.