

## Indigestion and Heartburn

The increased progesterone of pregnancy which softens the smooth muscles also slows digestion and sometimes causes incomplete closure of the valve in the upper portion of the stomach, making reflux more likely. As your baby grows, more upward pressure will be placed on the stomach, possibly making heartburn symptoms worse for some women. Below are some general recommendations to help ease the discomfort of heartburn during pregnancy.

- If lying down causes heartburn, sleep with an extra pillow or two under your head and chest.
- Oily, heavy, rich, and spicy foods that are hard to digest are major heartburn culprits. Pay attention to what you eat, and avoid the things that seem to exacerbate your symptoms.
- Graze through the day. Eating small, frequent meals and snacks rather than 3 large meals will sit better in your stomach.
- Eat slowly, taking time to enjoy your food while giving your body a chance to digest at a good pace.
- Consider going for a 15 minute walk after dinner to help aid digestion and to “get things moving”.
- Have dinner at least 2 hours before bed, and eat a light snack if you are hungry late in the evening. (Plain, or barely sweetened yogurt can help ease heartburn and it makes a great protein snack!)
- Eating a small handful of raw almonds and/or cashews can help improve digestion. Consider eating these (slowly) after a meal.

Papaya Enzyme tablets (found at most health stores) are chewable tablets that can be taken before and after a meal to help alleviate heartburn. This is a great natural alternative to over-the-counter antacids which contain artificial coloring and flavoring, not to mention a hard-to-assimilate calcium source.

Slippery Elm Bark is a great herb for relieving heartburn. This is also found in most health stores, sold in bulk. You can make a tea by steeping 1-2 teaspoons of the herb in a cup of hot water or warm milk. Add a bit of honey or cinnamon for taste.