



Advice from Dr. Weiss

This month:
I need a jolt!

I'm in my first trimester, and I'm exhausted all the time. Is it OK to indulge once in a while and have a cup of coffee to get me through the day?

Yes, in moderation—like a 5-ounce coffee a few times a week. Now, the long answer:

Caffeine has never been linked to birth defects, preterm births, or small babies in humans, but it has been in animal research. Some human studies have shown an increase in miscarriages if more than 300 milligrams of caffeine are consumed per day.

There's no evidence of harm at lesser amounts, but many ob/gyns feel 150 milligrams should be the daily limit, so there's a safety margin. Also, caffeine is a stimulant and can affect baby's sleep patterns in utero.

To help you determine your daily intake, here are the amounts of caffeine in typical drinks and foods:

- 16 ounces of strong coffee = 400 milligrams
- 16 ounces regular strength coffee = 260 milligrams
- 8 ounces coffee ice cream = 72 milligrams
- 6 ounces black or green tea = 45 milligrams
- 12 ounces caffeinated soda = About 40 milligrams
- 16 ounces decaf coffee = About 10 milligrams
- 1 ounce chocolate = 26 milligrams

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Doula Jill Says

This month: Swelling solutions

My ankles are swollen and my shoes are uncomfortable. I also feel very self-conscious about the size of my ankles and am really frustrated by the swelling. Help!

The increase in blood and fluids in your body during pregnancy makes swollen ankles a genuine stressor! Most care providers check for edema, or swelling, at each visit as part of prenatal care. Here are some self-care tips I pass on to my clients. Talk to your ob/gyn or midwife about trying them.

- Squeeze a lemon into a gallon of water and drink over a day (lemon helps cleanse the adrenals and circulatory system).

- Do a daily foot soak in warm water, with five drops of tangerine essential oil. I currently have a client who soaks her feet each night while watching TV, and in just one week, the swelling dipped drastically. She and her doctor are thrilled!
- Have your partner massage your ankles and feet for 15 minutes in the morning and evening. Most partners really want to be involved in your pregnancy: This can be a clear way of meeting your needs and promoting your good health!

Also, I would counsel you to examine your own self-talk and move away from scrutiny and judgment. Rather than coming to the curves and roundness of belly, ankles, and breasts with anger, consider compassion: Part of pregnancy is being present to what is, and this mindfulness will help you endure the challenges of labor and motherhood, too.

Don't turn away from your body's changes. Instead, commit to talking with your care provider about daily practices that promote ideal circulation. You may be pleasantly surprised at the release of retained water, swollen emotions, and bound up energy as you intuit a new path of peace in your pregnancy.

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Ask Dr. Dana

This month:
Flat-head fears

I've heard so many stories of babies with flat heads. I've even seen a few infants with helmets on to shape their skulls. What can I do to avoid this?

Pediatricians are seeing more cases of babies with flat heads, or plagiocephaly. To prevent flat-head syndrome, your new baby should sleep on his back, but spend many of his waking moments on his tummy.

You can start "tummy time," as most moms of infants name it, within the first week of life. I recommend my new moms have their babies do a little bit of tummy time after each diaper change. It's an easy way to remember to give your baby this important time, which not only allows the head to shape properly, but also strengthens core muscles for crawling and eventually sitting upright.

I think another risk factor for a flat head is spending too much time in a car seat or in an infant bouncy seat. The car seat is meant to restrain and protect your infant in the event of an auto accident. It keeps your baby in a fixed, reclined position. Your baby should be able to move, wiggle, and stretch as much as possible. So, leave the car seat in the car when you can. 

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The advice provided in these columns is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical diagnosis, advice, or treatment for specific medical conditions.