

## Safety Issues in Pregnancy

### Traveling:

Traveling is safe in pregnancy until about 34-36 weeks (unless you have increased risk factors for preterm labor). A good rule of thumb is not to travel anywhere you wouldn't feel comfortable delivering a baby! No matter which method of travel you choose, car, bus, plane, etc, make sure to take frequent breaks to walk and stretch your calves. Women are at increased risk for blood clots just from being pregnant.

### Seatbelt Use:

Even after your belly grows to the point of being uncomfortable, it is important to always wear a seatbelt. The seatbelt goes over and below your abdomen, low on the hips. Even though the seat belt may press on the abdomen, it is still much safer than being ejected from a car in an accident.

### Exercise Do's and Don'ts:

Exercise is great in pregnancy, particularly low impact activities such as walking, swimming, and stationary biking. Avoid overheating and drink plenty of water. Start a new exercise regimen slowly and increase duration and intensity over time.

- Exercises that involve balance can be tricky once your center of gravity changes with a growing belly, for instance mountain or road biking, skiing (downhill and water), horseback riding, racquet sports (tennis/squash).
- Contact sports should also be avoided.
- Water skiing and scuba diving can cause water or air bubbles to enter the uterus.

### Toxoplasmosis:

Toxoplasmosis is caused by an intracellular parasite, *Toxoplasma gondii*, which is found in raw meats, cat feces, and soil. Toxoplasmosis can have dramatic effect on the fetus even though symptoms are mild or non-existent in the mother. Miscarriage, stillbirth, or congenital abnormalities mostly involving the nervous system can result. Have someone else change the kitty litter, if possible, and wear gloves when gardening (the garden is every cat's litter box!) to avoid infection. Also, remember to thoroughly cook all meat to an internal temperature of 158° F (70 °C).

### Sleeping Positions:

Avoid sleeping on your back once you are in the 2<sup>nd</sup> trimester, as the blood flow to the uterus can be compromised by the weight of itself on the major blood vessels (inferior vena cava and aorta). Try to lie on your side, with a pillow between your legs and/or under your abdomen. Propping yourself tilted on your side with a pillow can be helpful as well.

### Domestic Violence:

Unfortunately, Domestic Violence is more likely to start or escalate in a woman's pregnancy and in the postpartum period. Please let us know if we can help you.

[www.atriavt.org](http://www.atriavt.org)

<http://www.whbw.org/>

802-388-4205 or 800-388-4205

1-800-ABUSE95

### Cleaning Products:

There are lots of chemicals used in cleaning products. Make sure to read the labels for warnings for pregnant women. Never use anything labeled "toxic." Do not mix ammonia and chlorine products as this mixture makes a gas that is harmful for anyone. There are many natural products which can be safer to use during pregnancy. If you use any cleaning products, make sure to wear thick rubber gloves and open the windows / turn on vent fans to circulate air.

**Beauty Products:**

Chemicals used in nail salons let off fumes that can be toxic and you should avoid them while you are pregnant. If you cannot avoid them, make sure there is an open window or door for fresh air. To be on the safe side, you should not use artificial fingernails while pregnant. Hair products such as dyes, permanents, and straighteners are safe to use during pregnancy. You will get a very small amount of the chemical into your body from your scalp, but there are no reports that this exposure is harmful to you or your baby.

**Pesticides:**

Pesticides (chemicals used to kill bugs) are found in water, on fruits, vegetables, in gardens and parks, and most places plants grow. Make sure to wash all fruits and vegetables before eating them. It is a good idea to peel them too. Pregnant women should avoid pesticides, but if you have to use them, have someone else apply the chemical; avoid being in the area where pesticides have been used for 24 hours; and remove food, dishes, towels, and eating utensils from the area where pesticides are used. If you have to use pesticides yourself, wear gloves and clothing that you can wash.

**Craft / Painting Supplies:**

Avoid certain craft supplies like stained glass material, oil paints, and ceramic glazes. Substitute watercolor, acrylic, or latex paints and glazes.

**Tap Water:**

Avoid well-tap water that has not been tested or you think is unsafe. If you have any concerns about the quality of your water, call your local health department. In the United States, in general, tap water is safe, but it is important to know that the water you are drinking has been tested.