

## Heartburn and indigestion

To allow your baby to grow during pregnancy, your muscles must be relaxed. To ensure this, Mother Nature has a trick up her sleeve in the form of progesterone. During pregnancy your body produces extra progesterone, which affects all of your muscles - including the valve at the entrance to your stomach. As a result, you may find yourself suffering from heartburn as small amounts of stomach acid can now enter. It's also harder for food to move through your system now that your digestive muscles are relaxed and the added pressure from your growing uterus pressing on your stomach won't help either.

Although pregnancy heartburn can be uncomfortable for you, it plays an important part in helping your baby to get the nutrients they need. It can force you to eat more slowly allowing food longer to digest, and allows your baby more time to absorb the goodness.

### How to relieve heartburn

In the meantime, some of these heartburn remedies may ease the pain:

- Caffeine can bring on heartburn, so avoid tea and coffee
- Acidic citrus fruits and juices will exacerbate heartburn. You can still get fibre from wholegrain bread, brown rice, wholegrain breakfast cereals and other fruits and vegetables
- Avoid spicy, fatty or very rich dishes
- Cut out chocolate
- Eat little and often, and no later than two hours before bedtime
- Drink plenty of water - two glasses before a meal will help with digestion
- Contrary to popular belief, milk can make heartburn worse. A cold glass of water will provide just as much soothing relief
- Chewing gum after a meal will increase saliva production, which can help to neutralise stomach acid
- It's reported that peppermint tea and raw garlic can help. If you'd prefer not to eat fresh garlic, try garlic capsules instead
- Sleeping with extra pillows to prop up your top half – gravity should keep your stomach acid down
- If nothing seems to help, speak to your doctor who may be able to recommend some pregnancy-safe antacids

If you have any other digestive worries or want to ask a question about your diet, our Careline team includes midwives and nutritional advisors. Give them a call on **08457 623 928** and see if they can help or try our instant messaging service, Live Chat