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## *Summer Time and the Livin' is Easy – Unless You're Pregnant!*

Pregnancy is stressful for a woman's body in any season, but add in the heat and humidity of Summer and you've got the perfect recipe for *misery*. Here are five common Summertime challenges that pregnant women need to be aware of and tips to ease these hot-weather woes.

1. **Heat Intolerance** – Body temperature during pregnancy is already higher than normal, so when the temperature goes up outside, pregnant women are bound to feel uncomfortable. *Keep cool* by exercising at

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cooler times of the day; wearing lightweight, loose, comfy maternity clothes made of breathable fabrics; and staying indoors when the Heat Index is 90 or above. Getting into a pool and swimming not only cools a person off, but the buoyancy eases stress on squished internal organs and pressure on joints. No access to a regular pool? Try a plastic baby pool – and keep it for baby – or soak in a cool bath with a scented candle and a favorite book. A cool, damp washcloth applied to the back of the neck, forehead or top of the head can also help reduce body temperature. Of course, women need to be warned to get indoors, lie down and drink cool water or electrolyte solution at the first sign of *weakness, fatigue, dizziness, lightheadedness* or *excessive thirst*, signs of heat prostration.

2. **Dehydration** – In addition to the usually recommended 8 glasses of water a day, an ***additional 8 ounces of fluid*** should be added for every hour spent in the summer heat to replace the amount of water sweated out. If one perspires heavily, then more fluid needs to be consumed. Water is good, but orange juice, milk, popsicles and sports drinks will also do the trick by replacing electrolytes as well as water. Proper hydration helps the body stay cool, fight constipation and decrease water retention. And who needs to be hot, puffy and bound up while pregnant in the summer?
3. **Sunburn** – Pregnant women are more prone to sunburn than non-pregnant women, so avoid direct mid-day sun. ***Use a high SPF sunscreen***, 30-45 if you have fair skin, or better yet, a sunblock. Increased melanin production can lead to the “*mask of*

*pregnancy*” on the face or a “*linea negra*” down the middle of the abdomen.

4. **Leg Swelling** – Physiological edema, or swelling, can increase dramatically if the second half of pregnancy occurs during the summer months, according to Hyun-Joo Lee, MD, an OB-Gyn at Albert Einstein Medical Center in Philadelphia. ***To relieve swelling***, keep legs elevated whenever you can. Lie down for 30-60 minutes during lunch or at the end of the day. Place a cold, damp towel over the legs for added soothing. At night, keep your legs elevated while sleeping by placing a rolled-up towel or blanket under the mattress at the foot of the bed. Wear comfortable shoes, perhaps a half size larger than normal. Walk 2-3 times a week during the cooler times of the day. Remove rings if they appear to be getting tight. Get a prenatal massage! Massage helps the body fight off swelling. **DO NOT** wear constrictive clothing, stand in one place for too long or take any diuretic substances. Reduce, but don't eliminate, salt from the diet. Salt contains iodide, an essential element for healthy fetal development.
5. **Fatigue** – Being pregnant is hard work – a woman is building a new person, after all! So Moms need plenty of rest. Planning daily chores and “nesting” activities for the earliest part of the morning permits using cooler morning temperatures to your advantage. The afternoon is the hottest part of the day, so if possible, take a mid-day siesta to bypass the heat and let your body recuperate and recharge. Taking a swim exercise class, like water aerobics, provides low-to-no-impact muscle strengthening and stretching while keeping one cool and refreshed. Check with your local gym or YMCA. Take a cool

bath just before bedtime. It will reduce your body temperature and, honestly, just feels good! Nighty, night!



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