

PREGNANCY AND TRAVEL

Traveling while pregnant is generally safe and enjoyable in a normal pregnancy up until shortly before the due date. By using common sense, paying attention to your body's signals, and following a few simple guidelines, you can ensure the health of your baby and yourself. If you are having problems with your pregnancy, have other medical conditions to consider, or you are nearing your due date; discuss your travel plans with your doctor.

The best time of pregnancy for any type of travel is usually during the second trimester (14-28 weeks). This is when most women feel the best. During this time, morning sickness is usually no longer a problem, your body is better adjusted to the pregnancy, and your energy level is back to normal. As your pregnancy moves into the last few weeks, it will be more difficult for you to move around and less comfortable to sit or ride for very long.

What *your* doctor can do:

- Provide you with the name of another doctor at your destination point, in case of emergency.
- Give you a medical release, especially if it is late in your pregnancy.

What *you* can do:

- Plan to walk every 1-2 hours. Stretching and moving will reduce swelling and keep you more comfortable. Wear comfortable, well-fitting shoes.
- Be prepared for temperature and humidity changes. Wear layered clothing that does not bind and is comfortable.
- Take a few light snacks to reduce nausea and hunger; and drink plenty of water and other liquids.
- Carry your medical records with you if you will be far from home.
- Consider any medications you might need, such as stool softeners, or motion-sickness pills. Discuss these with your doctor before you leave. Avoid prescription and over-the-counter medicines unless your doctor has told you they would be safe to use.
- If you will be away for several weeks, schedule your prenatal visits no more than a few days before leaving and a few days after you return.
- If you plan to travel close to your due date, consider the possibility of early labor. Check with your doctor before making definite plans.
- Be flexible with your plans. That way, if problems develop, either before you leave or while you are away, you will be better prepared to make changes.
- Always wear a seat belt when you travel by car. It is not true that a seat belt will hurt the baby if there is an accident. The best way to protect the baby is to protect yourself since your body provides the best protection of the baby. Place the lap belt over the lower abdomen or upper thighs and the shoulder belt between the breasts and across the shoulder. Adjust your seat to be certain the shoulder belt is not against your neck.
- To be comfortable and enjoy the trip, try to limit riding to no more than 5-6 hours each day.
- Flying is generally safe during pregnancy. US airlines typically allow air travel for pregnant women up to 36 weeks of pregnancy. You may be asked to show proof of your health status and the status of your pregnancy.
- Boat travel can be a great way to relax but may also cause nausea. During pregnancy may not be a good time for your first cruise.
- If you are traveling by bus, be prepared for the narrow aisles and small bathrooms.
- Travel by train allows you to move around more but maintaining your balance, especially in

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Page 2 of 2

late pregnancy, may be difficult. Bumpy rides, however, do not induce labor.

- Especially for travel abroad, consider how you will avoid contaminated food or drink; availability of medical facilities and the need for immunizations.

Contact your doctor for any unanswered questions to ensure your comfort and the health and safety of you and your baby.