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BREATHING FIRE: Managing Heartburn in Pregnancy



Plagued by a burning sensation in your chest and throat? You might have pregnancy-induced reflux (heartburn), even if you've never experienced it before pregnancy. It's common to develop reflux in your second or third trimester. Unfortunately, these symptoms are likely to get worse as your pregnancy progresses, and may be triggered or worsened by certain foods or situations.

Here are some diet and lifestyle strategies to combat mild-to-moderate heartburn in pregnancy:

- 1) **Eat mindfully:** Eat before you're too hungry, and until satisfied but not over-full. Both an empty stomach and overfilling your stomach may trigger reflux. This may mean eating smaller, more frequent meals instead of 3 meals per day.
- 2) **Take note of food triggers:** Caffeine, oily/fatty foods, chocolate, spicy food, and mint are common offenders. Reduce how much/often you consume these if they bother you. If it isn't clear, keep a food and symptom journal for 1-2 days to help identify whether certain foods or quantities are triggering reflux.
- 3) **Watch your posture:** Keep a straight back while standing/sitting, and avoid lying down right after eating. If heartburn wakes you at night try having a light snack 1-2 hours before bed, and placing a thick pillow under the head of your mattress to raise it by a couple of inches.

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- 4) **Get moving!** Go for a 10-20 minute walk after meals to stimulate the emptying of your stomach and the digestive process. The stress relief from activity is an added bonus, since stress can trigger reflux in many women.
 - 5) **Flavor Swap:** Various forms of mint (such as peppermint tea, or mint flavored chewing gum) are known to trigger or worsen reflux symptoms; consider swapping for a mint-free herbal tea like ginger or another flavour of chewing gum
 - 6) **Avoid tight-fitting clothing:** external pressure can add to your discomfort.
 - 7) **Try a small glass of milk** or calcium-fortified plant-based milk alternative if you're getting heartburn on an empty stomach. One or two Tums or other antacid tablets can help too, but be sure you're not exceeding the total daily dose recommendations on the package. High intake of calcium supplementation raises your risk of kidney stones in pregnancy.

If you're still struggling with heartburn, or experiencing discomfort on the daily, it might be time to move on to some pharmaceutical strategies. Be sure to speak to a trusted healthcare provider who knows your personal medical history before starting a regular medication routine. Prescription medications are also an option for medical management if you're finding over-the-counter options aren't working for you. The good news is that symptoms usually go away after baby's born. (Hang in there, mama!)

For more nutrition-related pregnancy guidance, check out my eCourse [Mindful Nutrition for the Mama-to-Be](#) or connect with me via www.sarahoharanutrition.com

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