Heartburn in Pregnancy

Heartburn is common in pregnancy. It is caused by the hormonal changes relaxing your stomach muscles, and later in pregnancy it is caused by your growing baby pressing on your stomach. When you suffer from heartburn then following these suggestions may help you.

- Try eating small to moderate sized meals regularly over the day. Large meals may cause further discomfort.
- Drink half an hour before or half an hour after meals, so you do not overfill your stomach. Water and low fat milk are the best drinks. Avoid juice and soft drinks as these can cause more discomfort.
- Black pepper, chilli powder, caffeine and nicotine may cause pain because they increase the acidity of the stomach. Caffeine may also relax the muscles between your food pipe and stomach allowing further reflux, so take care! Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, cola/cocoa-based drinks and chocolate.
- Fatty/fried foods stay in the stomach longer and may cause discomfort. Chose reduced fat foods and limit fats in your cooking.
- Sit down to eat, and sit up straight to take the pressure off your stomach. Eat and drink slowly and rest after eating. Too much activity can slow down digestion and cause discomfort.
- Rest and relax as much as possible.
- You may find eating a light, high carbohydrate evening meal (like a sandwich, or some fruit and yoghurt) is more tolerable than a bigger, high protein meal. You could try swapping your lunch and dinner menu around.
- Try and eat earlier, and avoid lying down too quickly after a meal. If you are sleeping soon after a meal, try using extra pillows to elevate your upper body.
- Bedtime snacks may cause more acid secretion during the night, so try to avoid.
- Iron tablets can often cause stomach irritation. Only take iron tablets as prescribed by your Doctor or Midwife. Antacids can interfere with iron absorption and should be taken away from each other.
- Talk to your Doctor and use any medications as prescribed.

Please contact the KEMH Dietetics Department if you have any questions.
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March 2016