



The American College of  
Obstetricians and Gynecologists



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS  
FAQ055  
PREGNANCY

## Travel During Pregnancy

- **When is the best time to travel during pregnancy?**
- **What should I know about planning long car trips during pregnancy?**
- **What should I know about airplane travel while pregnant?**
- **What should I know when planning a trip on a ship during pregnancy?**
- **How can I prepare for a trip out of the country while pregnant?**
- **What should I be aware of when traveling out of the country?**
- **What health care preparations should I make before traveling while pregnant?**

### When is the best time to travel during pregnancy?

The best time to travel is probably the middle of your pregnancy—between weeks 14 and 28. Most common pregnancy emergencies usually happen in the first and third trimesters. After 28 weeks, it may be harder for you to move around or sit for a long time.

### What should I know about planning long car trips during pregnancy?

During a car trip, make each day's drive brief. Try to limit driving to no more than 5 or 6 hours each day. Be sure to wear your seat belt every time you ride in a motor vehicle, even if your car has an air bag (see FAQ018 "Car Safety for Pregnant Women, Babies, and Children"). Plan to make frequent stops to move around and stretch your legs.

### What should I know about airplane travel while pregnant?

Some domestic airlines restrict travel during the last month of pregnancy or require a medical certificate; others discourage travel after 36 weeks of pregnancy. If you are planning an international flight, the cutoff point for traveling with international airlines is often earlier.

When traveling by air, you can take the following steps to help make your trip as comfortable as possible:

- If you can, book an aisle seat, so that it is easy to get up and stretch your legs during a long flight.
- Avoid gas-producing foods and carbonated drinks before your flight.
- Wear your seatbelt at all times. The seatbelt should be belted low on the hipbones, below your belly.
- If you are prone to nausea, your health care provider may be able to prescribe anti-nausea medication.

### What should I know when planning a trip on a ship during pregnancy?

It may be a good idea, just in case, to ask your health care provider about which medications are safe for you to carry along to calm seasickness. Seasickness bands are useful for some people, although there is little scientific evidence that they work. These bands use acupressure to help ward off an upset stomach.

Another concern for cruise ship passengers is norovirus infection. Noroviruses are a group of viruses that can cause severe nausea and vomiting for 1 or 2 days. They are very contagious and can spread rapidly throughout cruise ships. People can become infected by eating food, drinking liquids, or touching surfaces that are contaminated with the virus. Before you book a cruise, you may want to check whether your ship has passed a health and safety inspection conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

### **How can I prepare for a trip out of the country while pregnant?**

If you are planning a trip out of the country, your health care provider can help you decide if travel outside the United States is safe for you and advise you about what steps to take before your trip. The CDC also is a good resource for travel alerts, safety tips, and up-to-date vaccination facts for many countries. While you are pregnant, you should not travel to areas where there is risk of malaria, including Africa, Central and South America, and Asia.

### **What should I be aware of when traveling out of the country?**

When travelling out of the country, make sure to follow these tips:

- The safest water to drink is tap water that has been boiled for 1 minute (3 minutes at altitudes higher than 6,000 feet). Bottled water is safer than unboiled tap water, but because there are no standards for bottled water, there is no guarantee that it is free of germs that can cause illness. Carbonated beverages and drinks made with boiled water are safe to drink.
- Do not put ice made from unboiled water in your drinks. Do not drink out of glasses that may have been washed in unboiled water.
- Avoid fresh fruits and vegetables unless they have been cooked or if you have peeled them yourself.
- Do not eat raw or undercooked meat or fish.

### **What health care preparations should I make before traveling while pregnant?**

If you are traveling in the United States, locate the nearest hospital or medical clinic in the place you are visiting. If you are traveling internationally, the International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (IAMAT) has a worldwide directory of doctors. The doctors in the country you are visiting may not speak English, so bring a dictionary of the language spoken with you. Another tip is to register with an American embassy or consulate after you arrive at your destination. These agencies may be helpful if you need to leave the country because of an emergency.

### **If you have further questions, contact your obstetrician–gynecologist.**

**FAQ055:** Designed as an aid to patients, this document sets forth current information and opinions related to women's health. The information does not dictate an exclusive course of treatment or procedure to be followed and should not be construed as excluding other acceptable methods of practice. Variations, taking into account the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to institution or type of practice, may be appropriate.

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