The Pregnancy Diaries: Why The Last Month Is The Hardest

By Ana-Marija Dolaskie — September 29, 2017

Most moms will tell you that the first and last months of pregnancy are the hardest. The first eight to 12 weeks can certainly present some debilitating symptoms: morning sickness and nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting, and fatigue so strong it sentences you to the couch for days.

Challenging, no doubt. But all very survivable. Until the ninth month — when you reach the end of your rope.

By the last month of pregnancy, you've gained anywhere between 25-35 pounds (or more, let's be honest). Your baby is literally the size of a watermelon. And not even a watermelon you can eat, which makes you mad because you want to eat everything in sight, hungry or not.

Sleep deprivation

Perhaps the thing you need most in the weeks leading up to delivery is also the thing you simply can't get: a good night's sleep. Why, you ask? Frequent urination, for starters, can break your sleep cycle several times per night. Though you may get some relief in the second trimester since the uterus rises into the abdominal cavity, the pressure comes back in the third trimester. That's because the baby is (most likely) head down and preparing for childbirth, so his or her head is pressing ever so conveniently on your bladder — which means when ya gotta go, ya gotta go.
Different aches and pains, particularly backaches, can also contribute to a restless night. If you awake and find you've slept on your back, chances are you will feel the pain and pressure in your lower back. Back sleeping can also cause the weight of your uterus to compress on a major blood vessel, the vena cava, which can leave you nauseated and short of breath. This is why doctors recommend sleeping on your left (most preferred) or right side.

If you've never snored in your life but want to know what it may be like, get pregnant and you'll be in luck. Snoring in the third trimester is the real deal, and it's kind of surprising when it happens. An estimated 30 percent of women snore during the third trimester due to swelling in the nasal passages, and due to the baby's increasing size and pressing on the diaphragm. Some women can sleep through the snoring, but if you're a novice, you're going to disrupt your sleep and that of your partner's.

Restless leg syndrome and leg cramping are also to blame for disrupted sleep. Cramping can occur either because of too much phosphorous or too little calcium in the body. Restless leg syndrome happens if there is an iron or folic acid deficiency.

**Hip pain**

As the body prepares for childbirth, connective tissue in the hips tends to loosen. This happens to bring upon flexibility in the pelvis so the baby is able to pass through the birth canal. And, because you're more likely to favor one side while you sleep, your lower back and hips simply don't get a break in the last trimester.

**Weight gain**

The weight really comes on strong in the third trimester, making even the easiest tasks difficult to manage — like getting in and out of bed, walking up stairs, or putting on shoes. In the third trimester, an expectant mother should gain about 1-2 pounds per week.

**Swelling of feet, legs, and hands**

During the course of my pregnancy, one advice I kept hearing was: Make sure you take time to put your feet up. I did not take it very seriously, as I always thought it meant to take time for myself and relax. *I get it*, I thought, but I'm not one to sit still very long. Now I know what people really meant is "put your feet up" — literally. Swelling in the feet, legs and hands — or edema — is another lovely addition in the third trimester. I've [written about it](#) before, but it bears repeating. Because fluid tends to build up, it really is important to elevate the feet, especially after a long day of work.

Congrats! You've made it to the last few weeks of pregnancy! Though the third trimester can be a real pain in the behind, it also means you're very close to meeting your bundle of joy. So sit back (with a pint of ice cream if you like), put your feet up (literally), and enjoy that big belly (because at least it's a quiet big belly). <- This is me patting myself on the back, by the way.