

## Acid Reflux in Pregnancy

Acid reflux affects up to 50% of pregnant women and is due to changes in hormones and the growing fetus. There are non-drug solutions to prevent the acid reflux caused by the pressure of the growing fetus and drug options if these are ineffective.

### Prevention:

- ✓ **Elevate the head of the bed.**  
Gravity can play a role in controlling reflux by decreasing episodes or producing milder symptoms.
- ✓ **Sleep on your left side at night.**  
Sleeping on the left side may reduce the frequency of episodes in patients prone to acid reflux at night.
- ✓ **Avoid caffeine, chocolate, & peppermint.**  
These items tend to decrease lower esophageal sphincter pressure increasing reflux symptoms.
- ✓ **Chew gum for 30 minutes after meals.**  
This will increase saliva production and frequency of swallowing, which helps to clear away acid in the esophagus.
- ✓ **Eat small, frequent meals.**  
This will allow the stomach to empty more rapidly and increase stomach contractions to decrease acid reflux.

### Treatment:

#### **Antacids: Tums, Maalox, Mylanta**

These are first line after preventative measures have failed.

#### **H<sub>2</sub> blockers: Zantac, Pepcid, Tagamet**

These can be used after the 1<sup>st</sup> trimester if prevention and antacids are ineffective.

#### **Proton pump inhibitors: Nexium, Prevacid**

These should be avoided except in severe cases in which patients have not responded to H<sub>2</sub> blockers.



