

## Travelling During Pregnancy

### Introduction:

Pregnant women often express concern when travelling, especially at the beginning of a pregnancy. However, in reality, most risks result from a disregard of travel guidelines when pregnant and from a failure to avoid harm. Good measures to follow before travelling include:

- Coordinate with your doctor beforehand, especially if you suffer from chronic illnesses (e.g. diabetes, high blood pressure) or if you had previously experienced a miscarriage or preterm labor.
- Pay attention to your health the days before your trip and inform your doctor of any complications or unexpected events.
- Contact the airline before booking your ticket to inform them of your pregnancy. You may also want to enquire about the possibility of cancelling or changing your ticket in case you experience complications.
- Do some research and planning work to identify obstetrics and gynecology clinics in the city or town you are travelling to.
- Avoid long trips (five hours or more).
- Try to schedule your trip between the 14th and 28th weeks of your pregnancy (the safest period) and before the 37th week. This will help reduce any discomfort while traveling due to the additional weight or to an increased risk of complications during the last weeks of pregnancy.
- Avoid travelling to areas with a high risk of diseases (e.g. Zika, Malaria).

### Avoid travelling if you have experienced the following:

- Toxaemia of pregnancy
- Rupture of membranes
- Preterm labor
- Multiple pregnancy

### **While travelling:**

After making sure that travelling is safe for both mother and baby, it's best to have the following ready during your trip:

- Important papers regarding the mother's condition (e.g. pregnancy reports or tests).
- Healthy fluids to avoid dehydration during your trip.
- Some medicines (e.g. painkillers, hemorrhoid cream, mosquito repellent) and a first aid kit.

It is preferable for you to travel with a companion who can offer you support in case you experience any complications during your trip.

### **Travelling by plane:**

Air travel is the most common means of travel. If possible, choose a comfortable seat, preferably an aisle seat. During the flight, do some leg and feet exercises to keep the blood moving, stop any pain from occurring, and reduce fluid retention. Such exercises include:

- Lifting your feet
- Bending and stretching your knees
- Stretching your leg while moving your foot in a circular motion
- Walking up and down the aisle

### **Travelling by car:**

A car is a good mode of transport for short distances (e.g. to towns and districts). However, you should consider the following:

- Keep the trip as short as possible.
- Let someone else drive.
- Place your seatbelt underneath your hip (belly) and between your breasts.
- Stop, get out of the car and walk from time to time.

### **Travelling by ship:**

Before booking your trip, consult with your doctor about taking motion sickness tablets.

### **Blood clotting:**

It occurs when small blood clots form in the veins of the legs or in any other part of the body, with the possibility of them travelling to the lungs. Sitting down or not moving for long periods of time (such as when traveling long distances while pregnant) may increase the risk of blood clots or deep vein thrombosis (DVT). Please take the following precautions to reduce your risk:

- Drink lots of fluids
- Wear loose clothes
- Walk and stretch from time to time

### **Medical care while travelling:**

You should identify obstetrics and gynecology clinics as well as emergency services in the area you are travelling to in order to avoid any complications or emergencies. Seek help from these clinics or services if you experience:

- A vaginal hemorrhage
- Pain in the pelvis or stomach, or contractions
- Signs or symptoms of toxemia of pregnancy
- Severe vomiting or diarrhea
- Signs of blood clots or DVT

### **Clinical Health Education Department**

For more information, please contact us by email on:

[Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa](mailto:Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa)