

Flying Deemed Safe in Pregnancy

Air travel is just as safe for healthy pregnant women as for the general public, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. "Questions from our patients about air travel during pregnancy are some of the most common during obstetric visits," Dr. William H. Barth Jr., chair of ACOG's Committee on Obstetric Practice, said in a statement. "When a patient with an uncomplicated pregnancy asks about occasional flying, we should feel comfortable saying, 'It's safe.'" Dr. Barth's committee noted that pregnant women can minimize their risk for lower-extremity edema and venous thrombotic events by using support stockings, periodically moving around, avoiding restrictive clothing, and staying hydrated. But while seated, pregnant women should use a seatbelt "low on the hipbones, between the protuberant abdomen and pelvis." And "gas-producing foods or drinks should be avoided before scheduled flights because entrapped gases expand at altitude." ACOG said it also aims to dispel concerns about radiation during flights. Occasional travelers are unlikely to exceed more than 15% of the radiation limit for a 40-week pregnancy even during the longest intercontinental flight, ACOG said. However, airline crewmembers and frequent flyers could exceed the limit during pregnancy. But flying isn't recommended for women who may need emergency care or who have medical or obstetric conditions that would be aggravated by flying, said ACOG. Its opinion was to be published in this month's issue of *Obstetrics and Gynecology*.