Sleep Hygiene in Pregnancy

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Why is it important to address sleep?

- Sleep problems during pregnancy are common
  - Changing hormone levels
  - Nausea, frequent nighttime urination, GERD, and other pregnancy-related discomforts
  - Anxiety and worry can also contribute to insomnia
- Preexisting sleep problems can worsen during pregnancy
  - Risk for development of sleep apnea, particularly for women who are overweight when they become pregnant
- Many sleep disorders go undiagnosed during pregnancy because patients often assume sleep disturbances are just a given
- Poor sleep can have a negative impact on labor and delivery
  - Longer labor, more pain/discomfort during labor, higher rates of preterm labor and cesarean section (Chang et al, 2010)
- Poor sleep can exacerbate existing mood or anxiety disorders

How can I treat sleep problems in pregnancy?

- Consider treating pregnancy-related symptoms that may contribute to sleep problems
  - Screen for depression and anxiety
  - Antacid for GERD
  - Assess for and treat sleep apnea when clinically indicated
  - Treat nausea
  - For women with RLS symptoms, check folate/iron level, treat as appropriate
- When sleep hygiene measures (see right) are insufficient, medications can be considered
  - Hydroxyzine
  - Melatonin

SLEEP HYGIENE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

- Prioritize sleep
- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends
- Bed should be used only for sleep and sex
  - Avoid working, watching TV, or using other screens in bed
- Exercise for at least 30 min per day (unless contraindicated)
- Cut down on fluids about 2-3 hours before bedtime
  - But drink plenty of fluids during the day
- Eat frequent, small meals during day, avoid large amounts of spicy/acidic/fried foods, and raise head of bed/sleep on more pillows to help with symptoms of GERD
- If you can’t sleep after 30 minutes in bed, get out of bed and do a quiet, low-light activity until you begin to feel sleepy again
- When sleeping, lie on your left side with knees and hips bent; place pillows between your knees, under abdomen, and behind your back (may take pressure off lower back)
- Put a nightlight in the bathroom so that you don’t have to turn on the light
  - This will be less arousing and help you return to sleep more easily
- You can add daytime naps if necessary, but if you have difficulty sleeping at night, try reducing naps or moving them earlier in the day

Sources: National Sleep Foundation
(https://www.sleepfoundation.org/articles/pregnancy-and-sleep)