



Maternal adaptations to pregnancy: Gastrointestinal tract

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INTRODUCTION

Knowledge of the gastrointestinal adaptation to pregnancy is necessary for accurate clinical assessment of the pregnant patient with gastrointestinal symptoms. For example, pregnancy has a major effect on gastrointestinal motility, but little, if any, effect on gastrointestinal secretion or absorption. The changes in motility affect most of the gastrointestinal tract and are related to increased levels of progesterone. Another change is bowel displacement from the enlarging uterus in the second half of pregnancy. Some laboratory results (eg, alkaline phosphatase) and imaging tests are also affected.

This topic will review maternal gastrointestinal tract changes during pregnancy and common gastrointestinal disorders related to pregnancy. Information on maternal adaptations to other organ systems are presented separately.

- (See "[Maternal adaptations to pregnancy: Cardiovascular and hemodynamic changes](#)".)
- (See "[Maternal adaptations to pregnancy: Musculoskeletal changes and pain](#)".)
- (See "[Maternal adaptations to pregnancy: Renal and urinary tract physiology](#)".)

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