

# Great Expectations: Signs and Symptoms of Pregnancy

A Lesson Plan from Rights, Respect, Responsibility: A K-12 Curriculum  
*Fostering respect and responsibility through age-appropriate sexuality education.*

## **NSES ALIGNMENT:**

By the end of 8th grade, students will be able to:

**PR.8.CC.5** – Describe the signs and symptoms of a pregnancy.

**PR.8.CC.6** – Identify prenatal practices that can contribute to a healthy pregnancy.

**TARGET GRADE:** Grade 7  
Lesson 4

**TIME:** 50 Minutes

## **MATERIALS NEEDED:**

- Worksheet: “Early Pregnancy Symptoms” – one per every two students
- PowerPoint: “Pregnancy Symptoms”
- LCD projector and screen
- Desktop or laptop with PowerPoint on it
- Teacher’s Guide: “Early Pregnancy Symptoms”
- Index cards – one per student
- Shoebox with an opening cut in the cover large enough for students to push their cards through (anonymous question box)
- Homework: “What’s It Like to Be Pregnant?” – one per student
- Pencils in case students do not have their own

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Name at least three common symptoms of pregnancy.  
[Knowledge]
2. List at least two things a person can do once they discover they are pregnant to promote a healthy pregnancy.  
[Knowledge]

## **A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE:**

Language is really important and we’ve intentionally been very careful about our language throughout this curriculum. You may notice language throughout the curriculum that seems less familiar - using the pronoun “they” instead of “her” or “him”, using gender neutral names in scenarios and role-plays and referring to “someone with a vulva” vs. a girl or woman. This is intended to make the curriculum inclusive of all genders and gender identities. You will need to determine for yourself how much and how often you can do this in your own school and classroom, and should make adjustments accordingly.

## **PROCEDURE:**

**STEP 1** Explain that you are going to be talking about early signs and symptoms of pregnancy. Tell them that to get started, they will be working in pairs on an activity.

Divide the class into pairs. Tell them that they are going to be receiving a set of drawings that represent various signs that a person might be pregnant. Explain that they should match each drawing to the list of symptoms at the bottom. Let them know they will have 10 minutes in which to match the terms with the drawings. (5 minutes)

**STEP 2:** After 10 minutes, show the PowerPoint with the individual images of each drawing and ask students to provide the answers they came up with. With each slide, provide the information as described in the teacher’s guide. (20 minutes)

**STEP 3:** Say to the students, “Once a person confirms they are pregnant, they need to talk to a trusted adult for support and advice.

Say, “When a person carries the pregnancy for all nine months, they need to work to keep both themselves and the fetus healthy for those nine months. A ‘fetus’ is what we call

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a baby as it grows inside a person's uterus. Working to keep the fetus and pregnant person healthy is part of what's called, 'prenatal' care. 'Pre' means 'before,' and 'natal' refers to 'birth.' So 'prenatal care' refers to all the things a pregnant person needs to do to keep themselves and the fetus healthy."

Ask students to think of some examples of things a pregnant person should – and should not do – when they discover they are pregnant. Write responses on the board, probing for the following:

- Get a lot of sleep
- Exercise
- Reduce stress (exercise helps with that)
- Take vitamins
- Eat well
- Stop smoking
- Don't drink alcohol
- Reduce the amount of caffeine they drink

(10 minutes)

**STEP 4:** Tell the class you touched on a lot of information today, but that there is much more to pregnancy than what you discussed in this class. Distribute an index card to each student and ask them to write down any questions they still have about pregnancy that was not answered today. Tell them that if anyone does not have a question they should still write on their index card, "I don't have a question" so that everyone will write something.

Ask students to place their index cards into the anonymous question box as they leave class. As they hand in their cards, be sure to hand them each their homework sheet.

***Note to the Teacher:** Be sure to allocate time in your next class session to answer the questions asked. If some have nothing to do with pregnancy, feel free to hold those until you get to those topics in class; just be sure to tell the students that's what you're planning to do so they don't feel like their questions were ignored. (5 minutes)*

### RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES AT CONCLUSION OF LESSON:

Both of the in-class activities will serve as assessment of the two learning objectives. In addition, the homework assignment is designed to reinforce the lesson content while concretizing it with real-life experiences.

### HOMEWORK:

Students will complete an interview with someone in their lives who has been pregnant.

***Note to the Teacher:** Although there are instructions on the homework sheet for the parents/caregivers, you may wish to consider sending home an email to ensure they have some guidance about who would be an appropriate person to interview. A family member or family friend who lost a pregnancy or had a very challenging one would not be a good candidate for this interview, which is designed to reinforce the class content.*

## Pregnancy Symptoms

### Teacher's Guide

**Instructions: Use this guide to share information with students about the signs and symptoms of pregnancy after they have completed the match game.**

**Shortness of breath** – Lots of things can cause us to be short of breath at times. When a person gets pregnant, they can sometimes feel like it's harder to do things they could have done previously without getting winded. One example is going up a flight of stairs.

**Swollen/sensitive breasts** – One reason why it can be hard for a person to know whether they are pregnant is that the symptoms imitate the symptoms of having a period. Just like during a period, a person's breasts can swell slightly or be sensitive to touch – and not sensitive in a good way, more in an achy way. The breasts will continue to grow in size during the pregnancy as they prepare to make milk for breastfeeding the infant after it's born.

**Feeling tired** – Similar to being short of breath, pregnant people often find they get tired a bit more easily and often.

**Feeling nauseous/throwing up** – Many people have heard about “morning sickness” – where pregnant people wake up first thing in the morning feeling woozy or actually throw up. Sometimes, this happens only during the early stages of pregnancy; other people have it all nine months!

**Going to bathroom more frequently** (peeing) – Once a person is pregnant, they are peeing out the food and liquids they eat, as well as the food and liquids from the fetus growing inside. A “fetus” is what we call a baby until it is born.

**Going to the bathroom less frequently** (pooping) – As trips to the bathroom increase for urination, they actually may have a harder time moving the bowels during pregnancy. This has to do with the changes in hormones in the body – and later with the growing fetus pushing down on various organs inside the body.

**Headaches** – These are usually pretty minor, and usually during the first trimester. What causes these can be different depending on the individual person – but can be caused by not sleeping as well, being tired, feeling hungry, etc. Lots of pregnant people don't experience them at all.

**Lower back pain/cramps** – This is another symptom that can make a person think they are about to have a period instead of being pregnant. Cramping is common as the body is adjusting to having a fetus growing inside. The uterus is where the fetus grows – the baby doesn't grow in the stomach.

**Weird food cravings** – Some people get a sense that they might be pregnant when they start craving – or really, REALLY wanting – foods that don't typically go together – or foods they never ate before. For example, someone who previously never ate meat might start craving a hamburger.

## Pregnancy Symptoms

### Teacher's Guide

**Weird food aversions** – Opposite to food cravings, there may be some foods that a pregnant person always liked which they might suddenly not just stop eating, but actually feel put off by. This could be due to the texture, look, taste or smell of the food.

**More sensitive sense of smell** – Speaking of sense of smell – some pregnant people have a really heightened sense of smell. They may be more sensitive to negative smells, such as garbage, or even to typically positive smells, such as perfume or cologne.

**Mood swings** – You may remember talking about mood swings as something you go through during puberty because your hormone levels go up and down. Same thing in pregnancy. Some people feel very emotional for seemingly no reason.

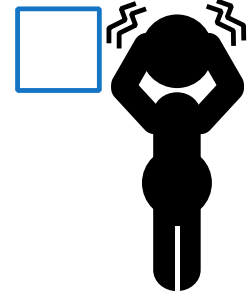
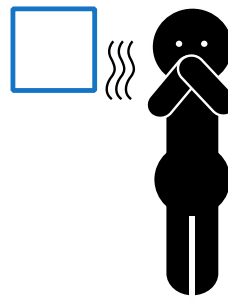
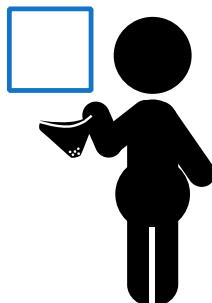
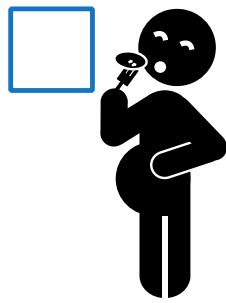
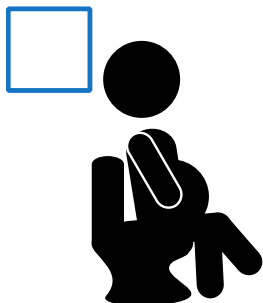
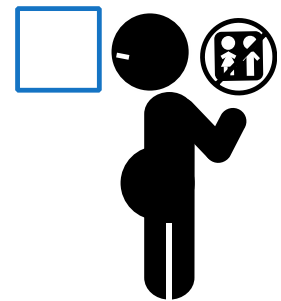
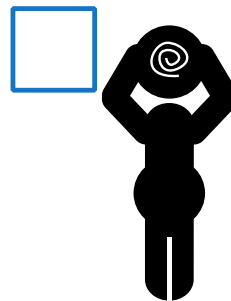
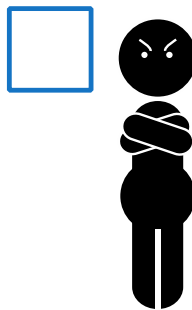
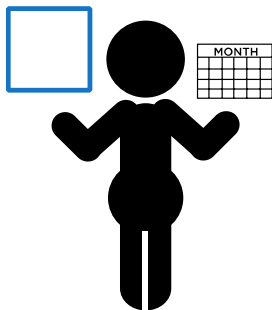
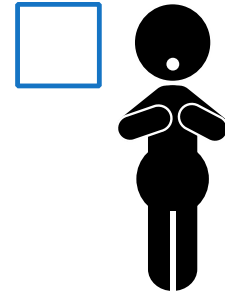
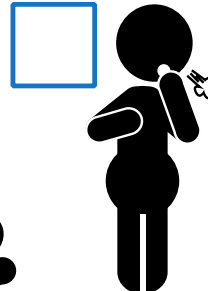
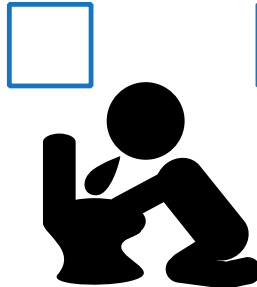
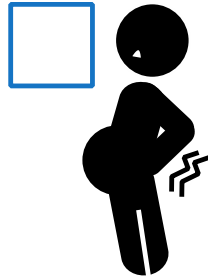
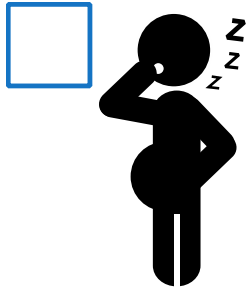
**Dizziness** – Many people do not feel dizzy, but slight dizziness is common, particularly at the very beginning.

**Light spotting** – It's very common for someone to experience some light spotting when they're pregnant. "Light spotting" means they might notice a little bit of blood in their underwear or on the toilet paper when they use the bathroom. Some people mistakenly think that means they are either about to get or having a light period, but light spotting can be a sign of pregnancy.

**Missing a period** – This is perhaps the most common symptom of pregnancy. People who don't have their period when they're supposed to often take that as a sign to take a home pregnancy test or go to a doctor's office or clinic to be tested. When people are younger, their periods are often less regular so it's important for a person who skips a period to take a pregnancy test as well. Plus, if they have never had vaginal intercourse, it's impossible for them to be pregnant.

## Worksheet: Early Pregnancy Symptoms

Names: \_\_\_\_\_



1 - SHORTNESS OF BREATH

2 - SWOLLEN/SENSITIVE BREASTS

3 - FEELING TIRED

4 - FEELING NAUSEOUS/THROWING UP

5 - GOING TO BATHROOM MORE FREQUENTLY (PEEING)

6 - POOPING LESS FREQUENTLY (CONSTIPATION)

7 - HEADACHES

8 - LOWER BACK PAIN/CRAMPS

9 - WEIRD FOOD CRAVINGS

10 - WEIRD FOOD AVERSIONS

11 - MOOD SWINGS

12 - MORE SENSITIVE SENSE OF SMELL

13 - DIZZINESS

14 - LIGHT SPOTTING

15 - MISSING A PERIOD

## Homework: What's It Like to Be Pregnant?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parents/Caregivers:** Please help your child to identify someone either in your family or a close enough family friend who experienced a pregnancy, gave birth and became a parent. Please be sure to choose someone for whom the pregnancy outcome was a positive experience so that the focus of the homework stays on the experience of being pregnant.

Person you interviewed (first name and relationship to you, like, "my aunt Denise"):

\_\_\_\_\_

### Interview Questions:

What made you think you might be pregnant? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you know for sure? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How did you feel when you found out you were? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Did your body feel any different during the first few months of pregnancy? If yes, how?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was the coolest thing about how your body changed when you were pregnant?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was something you didn't like about being pregnant? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was the best thing about being pregnant? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of person interviewed:** \_\_\_\_\_