

Is it Safe to Travel By Air While Pregnant?



Whether or not it's safe to travel by air while pregnant is a common concern for expectant moms. After all, there's the safety and well being of both mom and baby to consider. While there are some limitations when it comes to flying while pregnant, **it is generally considered safe to travel during a normal and healthy pregnancy.**

According to the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) (ACOG), "Pregnant women can fly safely, observing the same precautions for air travel as the general population." However, the key phrase here is "normal pregnancy." If you are pregnant and having any complications or medical concerns, it's highly advisable that you check with your healthcare provider before you embark on your trip.

Having said that, we'll also address the most common questions about traveling by air while pregnant:

Are Airport Scanners Safe While Pregnant?

The short answer is yes. It's perfectly ok for you to walk through airport security's metal detector systems.

The reason being, is that unlike the imaging you get at the dentist, airport scanners do not use x-ray technology. Instead, according to the [TSA website](#), airports use “non-ionizing electromagnetic waves that are reflected off the body.” These waves are comparable to radio waves, which essentially don't have enough power behind them to cause any damage. Additionally, these scanners have been thoroughly tested by the [Center for Devices and Radiological Health \(CDRH\)](#) to ensure the safety of your baby. If going through an airport scanner while pregnant still concerns you, you can always opt for a patdown by a female TSA agent instead.



What About Cosmic Radiation While Flying?

Cosmic radiation is just what it sounds like – radiation that comes from space. It's made by the stars and our own sun. The higher the altitude while you're in an airplane, the thinner the atmosphere gets. This means that there are fewer molecules reflecting cosmic radiation away from you. With less shielding, there's more exposure, and the longer your flight is, the greater the chances of exposure as well.

Despite this, the good news is that cosmic radiation really isn't much of a concern either. The amount of radiation you receive is far less than what you would receive during a routine x-ray at the dentist's office, so cross this off your list of pregnancy traveling worries.

🗣️ Cabin Pressure an Issue While Pregnant?

When flying commercially, cabin pressure is not an issue for your baby, but your body will adapt to the changes in oxygen. These changes are relatively harmless and include an increase in blood pressure and heart rate.

If you intend to fly in a smaller plane anytime during your travels, you should check with your healthcare provider first. Smaller planes have unpressurized cabins that could negatively affect oxygen levels and could pose an issue. Check with your healthcare provider to be safe.

Flying After Week 36 of Pregnancy

You can fly safely throughout your pregnancy, but it's recommended to **refrain from flying after your 36th week**. This isn't because it poses any risks to you or your unborn baby. It's because of the possibility that you could potentially go into labor midair, making it difficult for you to receive medical attention if you need it. If you need to travel after the 36th week, clear it with your healthcare provider first.

You should also check with the airlines if their policies will allow you to fly after 36 weeks because there are several airlines that will prohibit you from traveling when you're that far along. Some will also require documentation from your healthcare provider. Since each airline has different policies in place, be sure to call ahead so there are no surprises at the airport.

Is Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) a Concern?

DVT is a condition where blood clots form in veins in the legs or other parts of the body. [Pregnancy further increases the risk of DTV](#), and so does sitting and not moving for extended periods of time, which can be the case while traveling by air during pregnancy. To minimize your risks of DVT you can take the following steps:

- Get up and walk around often
- Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated
- Wear loose and comfortable clothing
- Wear compression stockings or socks

Special Assistance Through the Airlines

Nearly all airlines should provide special assistance if you ask for it. You might be able to get pre-boarding and wheelchair privileges that can be an excellent perk of being pregnant. They could also place you in an aisle seat that will make it easier for you to use the bathroom or get up to walk around. Don't hesitate to take advantage of these options if you feel that you could benefit from them.

Traveling is already stressful enough, and any steps that you can take to make your trip easier and more comfortable should be taken into consideration. Let your airline representative know that you're pregnant and ask them what they can do for you.

