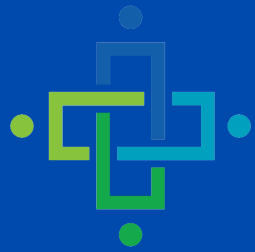


A Comprehensive
Guide to

Prenatal Health

July 1, 2024



International
Health Collective



Lifestyle Habits

Alcohol Use

Drinking alcohol while pregnant can cause long-term harm for the child, so it is recommended not to drink when pregnant or planning to be pregnant. Due to the baby's undeveloped liver, it cannot process alcohol and causes serious health impacts. Risks of alcohol intake include: miscarriage, premature birth, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Smoking Restrictions

It is recommended not to smoke if you are pregnant. Cigarettes contain over 4,000 chemicals, all dangerous for the baby. These chemicals limit oxygen supply, causing the baby's heart to be at risk. **Smoking causes an increased risk for:** stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, Asthma

Exercise Habits

Light and moderate exercise is not dangerous for the baby, but rather helpful. You should be able to comfortably talk while exercising. If you are breathless while talking, you are most likely exercising strenuously. Exercise tips during pregnancy: walking at a light pace for ~30 minutes daily, avoiding doing exercises that include laying on your back for long periods of time.

Mental Health Care

Due to hormonal changes in pregnancy, anxiety and depression are common mental health issues in pregnant women. If you are feeling symptoms of depression or anxiety, it may help to: talk to trusted friends, family, a doctor, or other pregnant women with similar experiences

Common Symptoms

Some common symptoms of pregnancy include back pain, leakages in urine and stool, thicker hair growth, constipation, fatigue, frequent urination, indigestion, heartburn, leg cramps, and nausea in the morning.



Warning Signs

Contact a doctor immediately if you experience the following symptoms:

- Heavy vaginal bleeding that is larger than a few spots
- Severe lower abdominal pain or pain in the tip of one shoulder, with heavy vaginal bleeding
- fever or chills
- Prolonged shortness of breath or racing heart
- Experiencing strong impact from a hit to the stomach
- Frequent dizziness with blurry eyesight
- Sudden painful swelling in one leg or sudden, severe swelling in face or hands
- Severe headache that does not go away after taking painkillers

What to Expect When Giving Birth

There are two common methods of childbirth: natural birth and cesarean section.

Natural birth:

- Early labor: Cervix begins to dilate, often with pink or bloody discharge and contractions. This stage can last from hours to days.
- Active labor: Cervix dilates from 6 to 10 centimeters
- Delivery: Delivery of the baby. This stage can last from minutes to hours. An epidural may be provided for pain relief.
- Placental Delivery: Occurs 30 minutes to an hour after the baby is born and is less intensive than the birth itself.

Cesarean Section: When complications arise during the labor stages, this surgical procedure is performed where the baby is delivered through an incision in the mother's abdomen and uterus.



Prenatal Nutrition and Vitamins

During pregnancy, it is necessary to maintain adequate vitamin levels for the health of the mother and baby. To prevent vitamin deficiencies, it is essential to eat a nutritious diet and, after consulting with a doctor, take prenatal vitamins if necessary. The key prenatal vitamins are **folic acid** and **iron**. Folic acid prevents neural defects in the baby's brain and spinal cord and is typically taken at least one month before pregnancy and continued through the first trimester. Iron supports placenta development. Always consult a doctor to determine the right dosage of prenatal vitamins since an excess of vitamins can be harmful to the baby. If you experience nausea or constipation from prenatal vitamins, consult a doctor.

Foods to Avoid

There are some foods that should be avoided for the health of a pregnant woman and the baby:

- Avoid raw or undercooked seafood and shellfish
- Avoid eating too much tuna
- Avoid eating undercooked meat or eggs, cook meat until steaming hot and cook eggs until egg yolks and whites are firm
- Thoroughly wash all fruits and vegetables before eating

Sources

- www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/pregnancy/pre-pregnancy-health/what-are-prenatal-vitamins
- www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/foods-to-avoid
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- www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/stop-smoking
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- www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/related-conditions/common-symptoms/vaginal-discharge