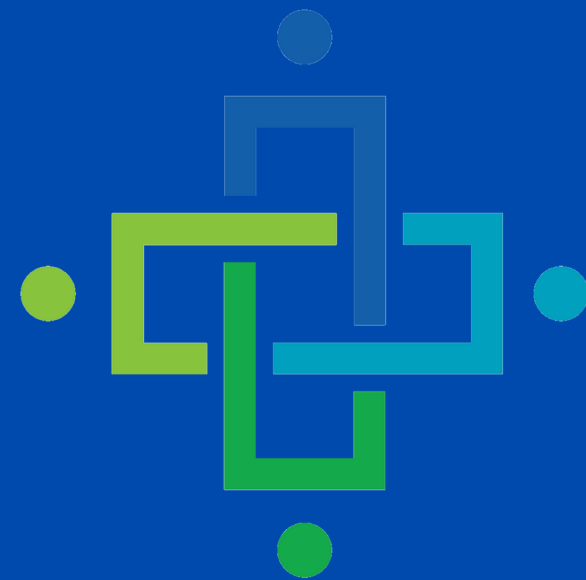


••••• A GUIDE TO PRENATAL HEALTH



International
Health Collective



Lifestyle Habits for a Healthy Pregnancy

Alcohol Consumption

- 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

Restrictions on Smoking

- It is recommended not to smoke if you are pregnant.
- Cigarettes contain over 4,000 chemicals that are 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

- If the pregnancy is not a high-risk pregnancy, light and moderate exercise is not dangerous for the baby. There is evidence that active women are less likely to experience problems in later pregnancy and later.
- Exercise can ease aches or pain caused by pregnancy.
- However, do not do strenuous exercises or exhaust yourself. As a general rule you should be able to comfortably talk to someone while you exercise. If you are feeling breathless or unstable when you talk, you are most likely exercising too strenuously.

Exercise Habits

- Exercise tips during pregnancy:
 - Remain active on a daily basis such as walking at a light pace for ~30 minutes
 - Drink water and other fluids
 - After 16 weeks, avoid doing exercises that include laying on your back for long periods of time. This can cause pressure on a main blood vessel which can make you feel dizzy

One example of a Exercise that You Could Do During Pregnancy:

- This exercise will help strengthen your leg and hip muscles to relieve pain.
- Stand up straight, directly behind a table or chair, feet slightly apart. Hold onto the chair to help keep your balance.
- Take 3 seconds to lift your left leg 6 to 12 inches out to the side. Keep your back and both legs straight. Don't point your toes outward; keep them facing forward. Hold the position for 1 second.
- Take 3 seconds to lower your leg back to the starting position.
- Repeat with your left leg.
- Alternate legs, until you have repeated the exercise 8 to 15 times with each leg.



Mental Health Care

- Due to the physical and hormonal changes in pregnancy, many women face mental health challenges.
- Anxiety and Depression are the most common mental health issues in pregnant women.
- Depression affects up to 30% of pregnant women.
- Symptoms of Depression include:
 - Fatigue
 - Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
 - Difficulties with concentrating
 - Sleeping too little or too much



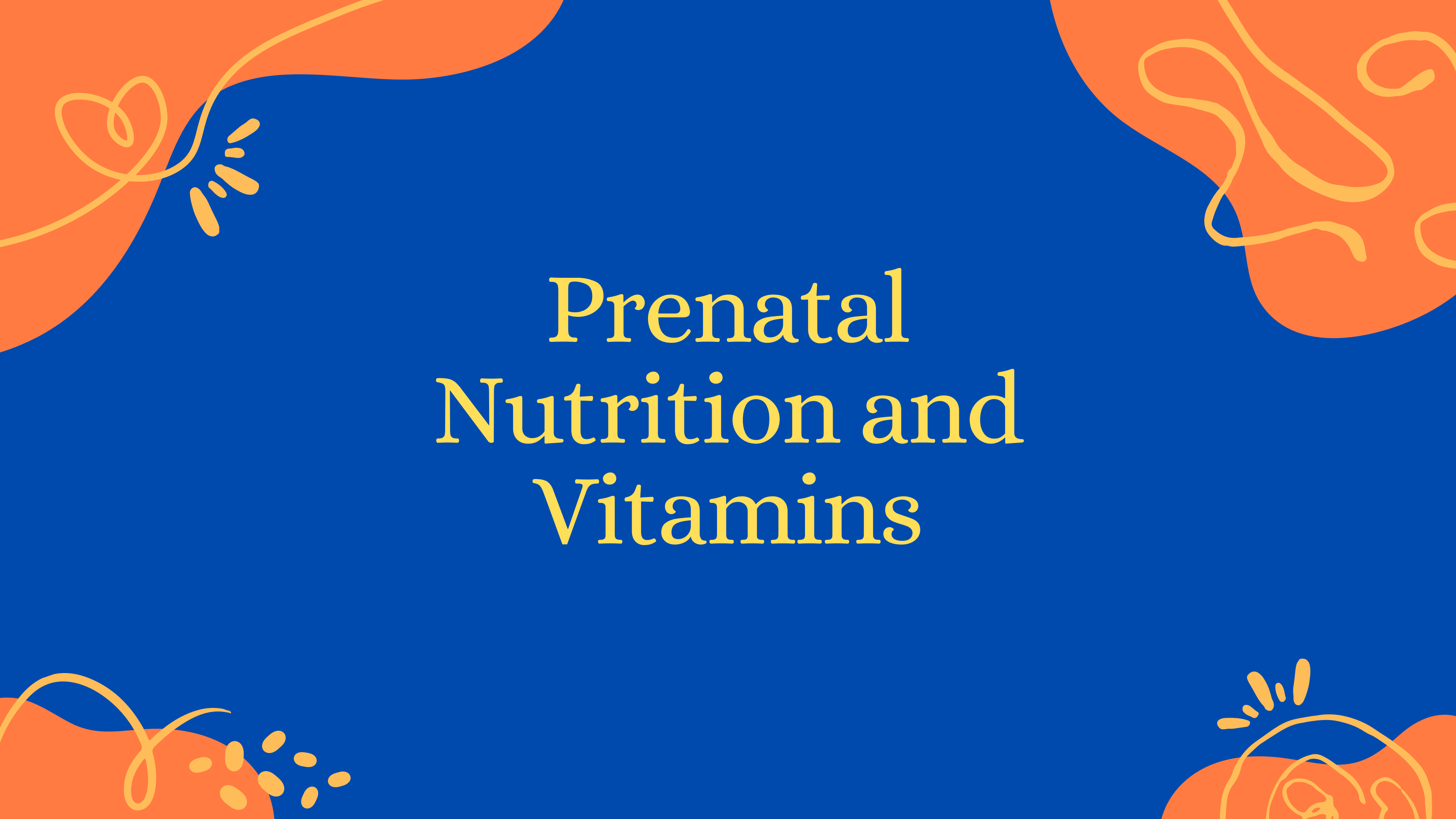
Mental Health Care

- Anxiety can be increased in pregnant mothers
 - Symptoms include:
 - Panic attacks
 - Repeated thoughts or images of frightening things happening to the baby
 - Restless sleep





- If you are feeling these symptoms, you are not alone. These are some actions that can help:
 - Talking to a trusted friend, family member, or doctor
 - Talking to other pregnant women who may be going through the same experiences as you
 - Breathing exercises: Sit or stand with your feet hip-width apart flat on the ground, breathe in from your nose and count to 5, and exhale out from your mouth while counting to 5.
 - Regular physical exercise and regular meals



Prenatal Nutrition and Vitamins


Prenatal Vitamins

- During pregnancy, some women may have reduced levels of vitamins in their body.
- This can have negative health risks for themselves and the baby.
- It is important to eat a nutritious diet during pregnancy to avoid vitamin deficiencies.
- Under a doctor's instructions, it is sometimes necessary to take prenatal vitamins if the vitamin is not common in food.





Prenatal Vitamins

- Prenatal vitamins come in capsules from the pharmacy and increase the level of vitamins in a woman's body.
 - The most important prenatal vitamins are iron and folic acid.
 - Folic acid prevents serious neural defects in the spinal cord and brain of the baby.
 - Iron supports the development of the placenta and the baby because iron-rich blood carries more oxygen to the fetus.
 - Iron also prevents anemia, a condition where blood supply levels become low.
 - Ideally, a woman should take folic acid for at least 1 month before becoming pregnant and throughout the entire pregnancy.
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- Caution: Before taking any prenatal vitamins, it is necessary to talk to a doctor first to find what dosage of vitamins is right for you. It is important to not take the vitamins in excess, because high dosages of vitamins like vitamin A may be harmful for the baby.
- Some women get nauseated or constipated from using prenatal vitamins, so it is important to talk to a doctor if you experience any of these symptoms. Other ways to alleviate these symptoms are drinking more fluids and eating more fiber.

Foods to Avoid



There are some foods that are harmful to pregnant mothers and their babies, and some doctors recommend to avoid the following food while pregnant.

Seafood:

- **Avoid raw or undercooked seafood and shellfish.** They can be contaminated with listeria bacteria that can cause infections leading to miscarriage.
- **Avoid eating too much tuna,** because tuna has more mercury in it than other fish and could be harmful to the baby.

- **Avoid undercooked meat or eggs.** Pregnant women are at higher risk for food poisoning from bacteria and may be more severe. It does not typically affect the baby, but in rare cases it can.
 - Cook all meats until steaming hot to remove all the bacteria.
 - Cook eggs until egg yolks and whites are firm.
- Thoroughly **wash all fruits and vegetables before eating** to remove harmful bacteria.



Warning Signs for Potential Health Complications

Common Symptoms

- Many changes in the body can be common symptoms of pregnancy. It is important to know the common symptoms so that you can distinguish between common symptoms and a medical emergency
- Common discomforts during pregnancy
 - Backache
 - Leakages in urine and stool
 - Thicker hair growth
 - Constipation
 - Fatigue and Tiredness
 - Frequent Urination
 - Indigestion and Heartburn
 - Leg cramps
 - Nausea and vomiting, especially in the morning

Warning Signs

- Go to the doctor or hospital immediately if you have
 - severe nausea or vomiting
 - Heavy vaginal bleeding that is bigger than few spots
 - Severe lower abdominal pain or pain in tip of one shoulder - especially if you also have vaginal bleeding
 - Fever or chills
 - Prolonged shortness of breath or racing heart
 - Sudden painful swelling in one leg
 - Experiencing a strong impact from a hit to the stomach
 - Frequent dizziness with changes in vision or blurry eyesight
 - Extreme itchiness in hands and in feet with dark urine or pale stool
 - Sudden, severe swelling in face or hands
 - Severe headache that does not go away after taking painkillers



What to Expect When Giving Birth

Methods of Giving Birth

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- There are two methods for giving birth: a natural delivery or a Cesarean section
- Natural birth involves delivering a baby through the vaginal canal, while C-section (Cesarean section) birth is a surgical procedure where the baby is delivered through an incision made in the mother's abdomen and uterus.
- C-sections are typically performed when complications arise in the birthing process



Stages of Natural Labor

- 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.

Sources

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Thank you!