

# Q & A about Pregnancy

## What will happen during prenatal visits?

Your doctor will probably start by talking to you about your medical history and how you've been feeling. You'll probably be weighed and have your blood pressure taken on every visit.

On your first visit, you'll also probably have a pelvic exam to check the size and shape of your uterus .

Urine and blood tests may be done on the first visit and again later. Urine tests are done to check for bacteria in your urine, high sugar levels (which can be a sign of diabetes) and high protein levels (which can put you at risk for preeclampsia, a type of high blood pressure in pregnancy). Blood tests are done to check for low iron levels (anemia).

Sometimes, an ultrasound may be done to help figure out when your baby is due or to check on your baby's growth and position in your uterus.

## How much weight should I gain during pregnancy?

About 11.5 to 14 Kg. If you don't weigh enough when you get pregnant, you may need to gain more. If you're very heavy when you get pregnant, you may need to gain only 7 to 8 Kg.

It's best to gain about 0.9 to 1.4 Kg during the first 12 weeks and about 0.5 Kg a week after that. Talk to your doctor about how much weight you should gain.

## What should I eat?

One of the most important things you can do for yourself and your baby is eat a balanced diet. There are a few foods that you should be more careful about eating while you are pregnant. Meat, eggs and fish that are not fully cooked could put you at risk for an infection. Do not eat more than 2 or 3 servings of fish per week (including canned fish).

Wash all fruit and vegetables. Keep cutting boards and dishes clean. Eat 3 to 4 servings of dairy foods each day. This will give you enough calcium for you and your baby. Do not drink unpasteurized milk or eat unpasteurized milk products.

If you drink coffee or other drinks with caffeine, do not have more than 1 or 2 cups each day.

It is okay to use artificial sweeteners such as aspartame and sucralose while you are pregnant, but you should try to them in moderation..

## **Should I take vitamins?**

You should take 400 mcg (0.4 mg) of folic acid every day for the first 12 weeks of your pregnancy. Folic acid can help prevent problems with your baby's brain and spinal cord. It is best to start taking folic acid before you get pregnant.

Your doctor might want you to take a prenatal vitamin. If you do take a prenatal supplement, make sure you're not taking any other vitamin or mineral supplement along with it unless your doctor recommends it.

## **How long can I keep working?**

This depends on if you have any problems with your pregnancy, what kind of work you do and if you're exposed to anything at work that could harm your baby. For instance, lifting heavy objects or standing for long periods can be hard on you. Radiation, lead and other heavy metals, such as copper and mercury, could be damaging to the baby. Working in front of a computer screen is not thought to cause harm to an unborn baby.

## **What about exercise?**

Unless you have problems in your pregnancy, you can probably do whatever exercise you did before you got pregnant. You may feel better if you're active. Try to get at least 30 minutes for exercise each day. Talk to your doctor about any special conditions that you may have.

Some women say exercising during pregnancy makes labor and delivery easier. Walking and swimming are great choices. If you didn't exercise before pregnancy, start slowly. Don't overdo exercise. If you can't talk easily while exercising, you are working too hard. Don't get overheated. Be sure to drink plenty of water so that you don't get dehydrated. It's best to avoid anything that could cause you to fall, such as water skiing or rock climbing.

## **What can I do to feel better?**

**Morning sickness.** Nausea or vomiting may strike anytime during the day (or night). Try eating frequent, small meals, and avoid greasy foods. Keep crackers by your bed to eat before getting up.

Talk to your doctor if morning sickness lasts past the first 3 months of pregnancy or causes you to lose weight.

**Tiredness.** Sometimes tiredness in pregnancy is caused by anemia, so tell your doctor. Get enough rest. Take a daytime nap if possible.

**Constipation.** Drink plenty of fluids. Eat foods with lots of fiber, such as raisins and bran cereal. Don't take laxatives without talking to your doctor first. Stool softeners may be safer than laxatives.

**Urinating more often.** You may need to urinate more often as your baby grows because he or she will put pressure on your bladder. This can't be helped.

**Varicose veins.** Avoid clothing that fits tightly around your legs or waist. Rest and put your feet up as much as you can. Move around if you must stand for long periods.

**Moodiness.** Your hormones are on a roller coaster ride during pregnancy. Plus, your life is undergoing a big change. Don't be too hard on yourself.

**Heartburn.** Eat frequent, small meals often. Avoid spicy or greasy foods. Don't lie down right after eating. Ask your doctor about taking antacids.

**Edema (retaining fluid).** Rest with your legs up. Lie on your left side while sleeping so blood flows from your legs back to your heart better. Don't use diuretics (water pills). If you're thinking about cutting down on salt to reduce swelling, talk with your doctor first. Your body needs enough salt to maintain the balance of fluid and cutting back on salt may not be the best way to manage your swelling.

## **What about Skin changes??**

Stretch marks appear as red marks on your skin. Lotion can help keep your skin moist and may help reduce the itchiness of dry skin. Stretch marks really can't be prevented but they often fade after pregnancy.

Other skin changes may include darkening of the skin on your face and around your nipples, and a dark line below your belly button. Staying out of the sun or using a sunscreen may help lessen these marks. They'll probably fade after pregnancy.

## **DONTS:**

- Don't smoke. Smoking raises your risk for miscarriage, premature birth, low birth weight and many other problems.
- Don't use drugs. Cocaine, heroin and marijuana increase your risk of miscarriage, premature birth and birth defects. And your baby could be born addicted to the drug you've been taking.
- Don't drink alcohol. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy is the major cause of preventable birth defects, including mental slowness.
- Don't clean your cat's litter box, or eat raw or undercooked red meat. You could get toxoplasmosis, a disease that can cause birth defects.
- Don't sit in the sauna or hot tub. This raises your risk of miscarriage and birth defects.
- Don't use vaginal douches without talking to your doctor about it first. Douching could force air into the vagina, which can cause an air embolism.