



Your Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy

Practical Considerations for Your Pregnancy

During your pregnancy, the best thing you can do for yourself and your baby is to take care of your health. You'll be experiencing significant physical changes over the next nine months, so be patient with your body. It's important to care for your emotional health too, especially since many women also experience more frequent mood swings during pregnancy. Although every pregnancy is different, here are a few recommendations to guide you.

Diet & Exercise

During your pregnancy, you're eating for two. This doesn't mean you need to double the calories, though. In fact, in the first trimester, you will not need a large increase in your calorie intake. By the second trimester, you'll require an additional 340 calories per day and during the third trimester, you'll need to consume an additional 450 calories.

“



Throughout your pregnancy, try to consume a wide variety of foods, including lean meats, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.

Gwenda Hill, MS, RDN, LD
NUTRITION

It's also a good idea to take a prenatal vitamin to help cover any gaps in your nutrition. Most women choose a prenatal vitamin with iron levels that meet their daily requirement. For more nutrition information, visit [ChooseMyPlate.org](https://www.choosemyplate.org).

Food Safety

During your pregnancy, you may experience a heightened sense of taste, and your food preferences may change. Listen to your body's changing wants and needs. You'll also want to keep the following food safety recommendations in mind.

During your pregnancy, you should avoid the following foods:

- Seafood high in mercury ([more information](#))
- Raw or undercooked seafood
- Undercooked meat, poultry and eggs
- Under-pasteurized foods
- Unwashed fruits or vegetables

“



If you're a **coffee** drinker, you don't have to kick the habit completely. A moderate amount of caffeine consumption (up to 200 mg per day, or 2 8-ounce cups of coffee) is safe during pregnancy.

Kathryn Flory, M.D.
OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

Listeria is a serious infection usually caused by eating contaminated food. Listeria affects 1/8000 pregnancies a year and can lead to miscarriage, preterm birth and stillbirth. Surviving infants are likely to be born prematurely and may suffer serious infections and/ or neurological problems.

Reduce your risk of contracting listeria by avoiding foods that have been in your refrigerator beyond their expiration date and by washing all fruits and vegetables. Although most outbreaks are sporadic, eating raw-milk cheeses can put you at a higher risk.

The risk of **congenital toxoplasmosis** can be reduced by 50% by avoiding raw/ rare meat and poultry and by washing all fruit and vegetables. Cats are NOT a common source of toxoplasmosis. Long time cat owners have likely been exposed and thus their pregnancies are not at risk. Use caution when handling young kittens as they may pose more of a risk. For more information on food safety visit: www.FDA.gov

Keep in mind that **no amount of nicotine, alcohol or illicit drugs are considered safe during pregnancy**. Using these substances is a direct cause of complications including Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, stunted growth, preterm delivery, and placental abruption (where the placenta separates from the uterine lining). If you need help staying sober, or are currently in a treatment program, don't be ashamed - reach out to your health provider. They will work with you to ensure a safe and healthy pregnancy.

Nausea

Nausea in pregnancy is known as morning sickness, but frequently occurs at other times of the day or evening. It is usually worse in the morning since the stomach is empty.

Reducing nausea: There are numerous techniques to reduce nausea. Not all of them work for all women. Try any one, or all, or any combination, until you find what works best for you.

“



The cause of nausea and pregnancy is not known, although the rapidly rising hormone levels in early pregnancy are believed to be a factor. Fortunately, it usually only occurs during the first three months of pregnancy.

Megan Bina, D.O.
OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

Remember: *If you go 24 hours without retaining any food or liquid, you should contact your doctor immediately. If nausea, with or without vomiting, is interfering with your daily life, and the below measures are not helping, please call your doctor.*

1. **Don't let your stomach get completely empty.** This is a vicious cycle: you are not hungry because you are nauseated, but if you go too long without eating, the nausea can get worse. Your stomach will tolerate small meals better than large ones. Plan out what you need to eat for the day to meet your minimum nutritional requirements. Eat a few bites every hour or two and space your total amount of fluids out over the day. If you need to use the bathroom during the night, take a few minutes to eat a small bite of food.
2. Keep some crackers, dry toast, popcorn, or other **dry carbohydrate food** at your bedside and eat a little of it before you get out of bed in the morning.
3. Eat or drink **something sweet** (like fruit or fruit juice) before going to bed at night and before getting up in the morning.
4. Avoid **spicy foods** and **foods with strong or offensive odors**.
5. Avoid **fats** in your diet. These can be especially nauseating.
6. Suck on **lemon drops, hard candy, or life savers** throughout the day.
7. **Drink peppermint tea**, which can settle the stomach and relieve nausea.

“



Some women discover a certain food that just doesn't agree with them during pregnancy. If you get extremely nauseated after eating any particular food 2 or 3 times in a row, you may have to give it up for the duration of your pregnancy.

Jacinda Serberio, M.D.
OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

8. Take **Vitamin B6** which can help relieve nausea if taken in large doses. Most prenatal vitamins contain only about 5 mg, so you'll want to purchase vitamin B6 by itself and take 25 mg 3 times a day.
9. Take **Unisom** with your vitamin B6. Unisom is an over-the-counter sleeping pill which decreases morning sickness symptoms when taken with vitamin B6. The usual dosage is one Unisom tablet taken with 25 mg of vitamin B6, once in the morning and once at bedtime. Since sleepiness can be a side effect, you may want to try half a Unisom tablet in the morning. The combination of Unisom and vitamin B6 is safe during pregnancy.

Weight Gain

WEIGHT GAIN		
What is a normal amount of weight to gain during pregnancy? Healthy ranges depend on your pre-pregnancy Body Mass Index (BMI), which is a measurement of your height and weight. Use the weight gain guidelines below as estimates.		
Category	Pre-Pregnancy BMI	Weight Gain Goal
Underweight	< 18.5	28 - 40 pounds
Normal Weight	18.5 - 24.9	25 - 35 pounds
Overweight	25 - 29.9	15 - 25 pounds
Obese (Class I)	30 - 34.9	11 - 20 pounds
Obese (Class II & III)	35 - 39.9 & 40 <	0 - 20 pounds, weight loss is acceptable

Exercise

Exercise has many benefits during pregnancy. Regular exercise can reduce or prevent back pain, prevent excessive weight gain, and reduce the risk of gestational diabetes and high blood pressure.

“



Thirty minutes of moderate exercise on most or all days of the week is recommended for women without obstetrical or medical complications. "Moderate" exercise means that you should be able to carry on a normal conversation.

Leslee Jaeger, M.D.
OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

During pregnancy, you should avoid activities with a high risk of falling or abdominal trauma, exercise at high altitudes and scuba diving. If you have questions about specific activities please ask your provider.

General Care & Advice

Dental Care

It can be tempting to put off other types of medical appointments during your pregnancy. However, it's important to see your dentist regularly, and not to put off routine care or other dental treatments.

“



Hormonal changes during pregnancy can make you more susceptible to periodontal disease and gingivitis (tender gums). Keep your regularly scheduled appointments can reduce your risk of contracting these diseases.

Sherry Paulson, M.D.
OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

Routine dental care and treatment of dental conditions should not be delayed or avoided because of pregnancy. Dental x-rays (with proper shielding) and procedures such as tooth extraction, cavity filling, etc. are not harmful to your pregnancy. If you have questions or concerns about a specific dental procedure please let your provider know.

Baths

It's fine to take baths during your pregnancy as long as the water isn't too hot. However, you should avoid hot tubs and saunas during your first trimester.

Sexual Activity

In most cases, pregnant women can continue sexual intercourse. However, intercourse should be suspended if you experience specific pregnancy complications like preterm labor, unexplained vaginal bleeding, leaking amniotic fluid, premature cervical dilation, placenta previa, or vasa previa.

Work

Although you may need certain adjustments to your work style, in general, women can plan to work throughout a pregnancy.

“



To stay comfortable at work, take short frequent breaks, use a chair with good lower back support, wear flat shoes with good support and consider wearing support stockings.

Sarah Tillman, M.D.
OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

Driving

Everyone should wear a seatbelt when traveling by car. Although many pregnant women find seatbelts restricting or uncomfortable, they should be worn 100% of the time during pregnancy. Increase effectiveness and comfort by placing the lap belt across the hips and below the abdomen, and the shoulder belt between the breast and to the side of the abdomen. Do NOT turn airbags off - they are designed to provide cushioning and protect against more serious injuries in case of a crash.

Flying

Most airlines allow travel up to 37 weeks gestation; however, individual carriers may have different policies. Commercial airlines travel is generally safe for those with uncomplicated pregnancies.

If you fly during your pregnancy, use these tips to stay comfortable and safe:

- Get out of your seat and walk every 1-2 hours to help prevent blood clots in your legs
- Consider wearing compression stockings, which can also help prevent blood clots
- Wear loose, non-restrictive clothing
- Discuss travel plans with your provider
- Travel with a copy of your prenatal records

Medications & Pregnancy

Few medications have been approved to be used during pregnancy. However, the medications listed below have not been shown to increase the risk of birth defects or adverse pregnancy outcomes when taken as directed.

“



Before you take any medication during pregnancy, it's important to weigh the severity of your symptoms against possible risks to your baby.

Karen Collins, APRN, CNP
OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

For more information, visit [MotherToBaby.org](https://www.MotherToBaby.org) or talk to your provider.

ALLERGIES

Non-medication therapies: saline nasal spray, saline nasal rinse (neti pot), nasal strips at night, elevate head-of-bed at night and try to avoid triggers

Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Cetirizine	Zyrtec	5-10 mg once daily	
Loratadine	Alavert, Claritin	10 mg once daily	
Diphenhydramine	Benadryl	25-50 mg every 4-6 hours	Max 300 mg per day

CONSTIPATION

Non-medication therapies: water, exercise, fiber rich foods, other foods such as apples, pears, peaches, cherries, raisins

Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Bisacodyl	Dulcolax	5-10 mg daily	Do not use for more than 1 week
Docusate sodium	Colace	100 mg twice daily	
Methylcellulose	Citrucel	See package instructions	
Polyethylene Glycol	Miralax	1 heaping tablespoon in 8 oz. fluid daily	Do not use for more than 1 week
Psyllium	Metamucil	See package instructions	
Senna	Senokot	See package instructions	Avoid long-term use
AVOID	Castor Oil		

COUGH, COLD, SINUS CONGESTION

Non-medication treatments: warm, humidified air, saline nasal spray, saline sinus rinse (neti pot), tea with honey

Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Dextromethorphan	Robitussin Max Strength, Delsym	10-20 mg every 4 hours	Max 120 mg per day
Guaifenesin	Mucinex, Robitussin Chest Congestion	200-400 mg every 4 hours	Max 2400 mg per day
Pseudoephedrine	Sudafed	Varies, See package instructions	2nd & 3rd trimesters only, avoid if you have high blood pressure
AVOID	Phenylephrine; Pseudoephedrine in the 1st trimester		

DIARRHEA

Non-medication treatments: clear liquids (water, broth, juice, sports drinks), low-fiber foods, avoid dairy, high-fat, high-fiber, spicy foods

Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Loperamide	Imodium	4 mg, then 2 mg with each loose stool	Max 16 mg per day
AVOID	Bismuth Subsalicylate		

FEVER

Non-medication therapies: rest, hydration

Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Acetaminophen	Tylenol	500 - 1000 mg every 6 hours	DO NOT EXCEED 4000 mg in 24 hours
AVOID	Naproxen, Ibuprofen, Aspirin		

GAS PAIN

Non-medication therapies: exercise, eating slowly

Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Simethicone	Gas-X, Phazyme	40-80 mg every 6 hours	

HEADACHE

Non-medication treatments: daily exercise, hydration, massage, warm or cool compress, rest, maintaining a regular meal and sleep pattern & avoid triggers

Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Acetaminophen	Tylenol	500 - 1000 mg every 6 hours	DO NOT EXCEED 4000 mg in 24 hours
AVOID	Naproxen, Ibuprofen, Aspirin		

HEARTBURN

Non-medication therapies: elevate head-of-bed at night, avoid trigger foods

Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Calcium Carbonate	Tums, Maalox	1-4 tablets as needed	Max 8000 mg per day
H2 Blocker (Ranitidine, Cimetidine, Famotidine)	Zantac, Tagamet, Pepcid (respectively)	Follow package instructions	
Proton-pump inhibitor (Omeprazole, Lansoprazole)	Prilosec, Prevacid (respectively)	Follow package instructions	

HEMORRHOIDS

Non-medication treatments: sitz baths (warm water 2-3 times daily), avoid/treat constipation, avoid prolonged sitting

Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Hydrocortisone	Preparation H	Apply 3-4 times daily	
Witch Hazel	Tucks	See package instructions	

INSOMNIA

Non-medication treatments: keep a regular sleep schedule, cut down on the amount of liquids in the hours before sleep, avoid caffeine after noon, exercise at least 20 minutes daily, place pillows between knees, under abdomen and behind the back, avoid naps late in the day

Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Diphenhydramine	Benadryl, ZzzQuil, Sominex	50 mg at bedtime	
Doxylamine	Unisom Sleep Aid, Aldex	25 mg at bedtime	

NAUSEA			
Non-medication treatments: eat small amounts of food every 1-2 hours, peppermint tea or candies, ginger containing foods or supplements			
Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Dimenhydrinate	Dramamine	50-100 mg every 4-6 hours	Motion sickness max 400 mg per day
Doxylamine	Unisom, Aldex	12.5 mg (1/2 tablet) every 6-8 hours	Use with Pyridoxine
Pyridoxine (Vit. B6)	N/A	25 mg every 6-8 hours	May be used alone or with doxylamine

PAIN			
Non-medication therapies for back pain: exercise, maternity support belt, acupuncture, water therapy. Non-medication therapies for night time leg cramps: warm shower or bath, stretching, ice massage, increase hydration, Magnesium supplement (see below)			
Generic Name	Example Brand Name	Typical Dose	Notes
Acetaminophen	Tylenol	500-1000 mg every 6 hours	DO NOT EXCEED 4000 mg in 24 hours
Magnesium L-Lactate	Mag-Tab SR	1 tab in the morning, 2 tabs at bedtime	For treatment of nighttime leg cramps
AVOID	Naproxen, Ibuprofen, Aspirin		

Vitamins & Supplements

Prenatal Vitamins

“



Though most well-nourished women meet nutrient needs by diet alone, it's recommended that you take a prenatal vitamin if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

Cristen Singer, APRN, CNP, CLC
OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

At a minimum, iron, folate and calcium should be supplemented (see below for dosing).

Herbal Medicines

The strength and purity of herbal medicines is unregulated. Herbal preparations can interact with commonly prescribed medications and lead to dangerous side effects. We recommend avoiding herbal supplements (with the exception of ginger for nausea).

VITAMINS AND SUPPLEMENTS		
Recommended daily dietary allowances for adult (>18 years old) pregnant and lactating women		
	Pregnant Women	Lactating Women
Vitamin A*	770 mcg	1300 mcg
Vitamin D	600 IU/day (15mcg)	600 IU/day (15 mcg)
Vitamin E	15 mg	19 mg
Vitamin K	90 mcg	90 mcg
Vitamin C	85 mg	120 mg
Thiamin	1.4 mg	1.4 mg
Riboflavin	1.4 mg	1.4 mg
Niacin	18 mg	17 mg
Vitamin B6	1.9 mg	2 mg
Folate	600 mcg (400-800 mcg)	500 mcg
Vitamin B12	2.6 mcg	2.8 mcg
Calcium	1000 mg (1300 mg for 14 - 18 year old)	1000 mg (1300 mg for 14 - 18 year old)
Phosphorus	700 mg	700 mg
Iron	27 mg	9 mg
Zinc	11 mg	12 mg
Iodine	220 mcg	290 mcg
Selenium	60 mcg	70 mcg

Bold = At a minimum, a vitamin should include these key nutrients often not met by diet alone
 *Excess Vitamin A is potentially harmful (>10,000 IU/day): avoid vitamins with >500 IU or 1500 mcg vitamin A



**Looking for more expert advice about pregnancy,
birth, and postnatal care?**

Get your complete care kit - From Bump to Baby, and Beyond!

GET YOUR KIT