

# A Healthy Pregnancy

Below are some things you can do to take care of yourself and your baby.

## Appointments and Classes

- Make an appointment as soon as you think you are pregnant to start prenatal care.
- Go to your regular prenatal check ups, even when you feel well. At the end of your pregnancy, your check ups will be every 1 to 2 weeks.
- Go to classes to help prepare you for labor and delivery, breastfeeding and baby care. Take your partner or other support person with you.
- Check if you have insurance for pregnancy and baby benefits.
- Ask for an interpreter and financial help if needed.

## Food and Drinks

- Eat balanced meals that include whole grain breads, cereals, fruits, vegetables, milk, and meat and other proteins. Avoid fried and high sugar foods.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water each day.
- Try eating smaller meals more often.
- Avoid or limit food and drinks with caffeine to 1 to 2 cups each day. Caffeine is in chocolate, colas, teas and coffee.
- Limit your intake of artificial sweeteners, including diet sodas, to 2 to 3 servings each day. Nutrasweet and Equal (aspartame) and Splenda (sucralose) in small amounts are okay, but do not use any saccharin (Sweet 'N Low).
- Avoid meats and eggs that are not fully cooked. Eat dairy products that have been pasteurized, including milk and cheese. Uncooked foods may have bacteria in them that can cause serious illness in pregnant women and increase the risk of miscarriage.

- Avoid unheated hot dogs and lunch meats from the deli counter or at restaurants. These are okay to eat if they have been heated through until steaming. Cook hot dogs in boiling water or microwave deli meat for at least 30 seconds on high for food safety.
- The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program is available to provide free nutritious food and health information for pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers and children. Go to [www.fns.usda.gov/wic](http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic) to find the toll-free phone number for your state or in Ohio call 1-800-755-4769.

## Weight Gain

Total weight gain depends on your pre-pregnant weight, eating habits, exercise and your metabolism. The average weight gain during pregnancy for a normal weight female is 25 to 35 pounds. You should gain 2 to 4 pounds in the first 3 months and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 pound per week after that. If you were under or over weight before pregnancy, ask your doctor or dietitian about how much weight you should gain.

If you are gaining weight too fast:

- **Limit** sweets and high fat foods. Choose low fat items, fruit or a small serving of frozen yogurt, sherbet, pudding or jell-o.
- Use very little butter, margarine, sour cream, mayonnaise or salad dressing. Try reduced calorie or low fat products.
- **Avoid** fried foods. Choose baked, broiled or grilled chicken, fish or turkey.

## Medicine

- Take your prenatal vitamins each day.
- Check with your doctor or clinic before taking any medicines such as prescription or over the counter medicines and herbals.
- Take only medicines ordered by your doctor.

## **Smoking, Alcohol and Drugs**

- Do not smoke and avoid being in the same room with people who are smoking.
- Do not drink alcohol or take drugs during your pregnancy.

## **Activity and Sleep**

- Get plenty of rest. Try to get 8 hours of sleep. It is best to lie down on your left side because this increases the flow of oxygen and nutrition to your baby.
- Exercise by walking, swimming or biking for about 30 minutes each day. Check with your doctor before starting a new exercise program.
- Learn and practice the exercises from your childbirth class.
- Wear a supportive bra that fits well.

## **Safety**

- Check with your doctor before having any medical x-rays while you are pregnant. Dental x-rays are safe if a shield is placed over your abdomen. The second trimester, months 4 to 6 of pregnancy, is the best time for dental care. Before any treatment, x-ray or cleaning, you may need to get permission from your obstetrician or OB doctor. This is for the health of you and your baby.
- Avoid paints (except latex), pesticides, sprays and other strong chemicals.
- **Do not** clean a cat litter box, or bird or reptile cages. Animal feces can have bacteria that can make you sick and harm your baby.
- Wash your hands well with soap and water after touching raw meat. Cook meat well.
- Wear seat belts low over your hips.

## **Share Your Concerns**

- Share good or bad feelings about your pregnancy, your body changes and having a baby with your partner, friends and family. Talk to your doctor or nurse if you are having problems coping.
- Write down questions to ask your doctor or nurse. Ask for more information on breastfeeding, birth control to use after delivery and choosing a doctor for your baby.

## **Planning Ahead**

- Get a baby car seat and install it in your car.
- Plan for things you will need the first 6 weeks, such as baby items, diapers, clothes and easy to prepare foods for meals.
- Plan for someone to help you at home after the delivery.
- Make arrangements for child care if needed.
- Make a list of phone numbers of people to call when your labor begins. Arrange for transportation to the hospital.
- Pack your suitcase. Put in clothes and other items to use at the hospital and that you and your baby will wear home.