

Having a Baby

Pregnancy and childbirth can change your life. It's important that you have the best information from the start. Being prepared for your pregnancy can help you stay healthy and have a healthy baby.

This pamphlet explains

- Why [prenatal care](#) is important
- How to stay healthy during pregnancy
- How to plan for your baby in your future

Prenatal care

As soon as you think you may be pregnant, call your health care professional to set up an appointment. Prenatal care is the health care you get while you are pregnant. It includes medical care, education, and counseling. The earlier you get prenatal care, the better your chances are for a healthy pregnancy and baby.

If you need help getting prenatal care, talk with your doctor, nurse, or school counselor. If you do not have the money for prenatal care or a way to get to an office or clinic, there are groups at schools or in your community that can help you.

Visits with your healthcare professional

At your first prenatal visit, you will have a conversation with your health care professional. It's important to answer all the questions honestly and with as much detail as you can.

You may be asked the date of your first day of your last menstrual period. This date is used to figure out how many weeks pregnant you are and estimate when your baby may be born (your due date). A pregnancy is measured in weeks at normal pregnancy and lasts about 40 weeks. It is divided into [trimesters](#): first, second, and third. A trimester lasts about three months.

You will usually have a complete physical exam, which may include a pelvic exam. If you have never had a pelvic exam, ask your healthcare professional to explain it to you. You may also have a urine test and some blood test period you may be tested for certain [sexually transmitted infections \(STIs\)](#)

As your pregnancy continues, you should visit your healthcare professional more often. At your visit you can ask questions you may not you may have. Your healthcare professional should check on your health and the health of your [fetus](#). A pelvic exam is not needed at each visit unless you are having complications.

An important thing to discuss at one of your prenatal visits is what kind of [birth control](#) to use after your baby is born. There are many options for birth control after you have a baby such as pills, the birth control implant, or the [uterine device \(IUD\)](#).

Talk with your healthcare professional about a method that works for you and when to start it period some methods can be started in the hospital before you go home period you should also use condoms to protect yourself against STI's.

Childbirth Classes

In childbirth classes, you can learn more about pregnancy, giving birth, breastfeeding, and being a parent. There may be special classes for pregnant teens.

There are also classes that can teach you how to take care of your baby. This includes how to feed, diaper, and bathe your baby and how to keep your baby healthy and safe. You can ask other mothers, family members, or healthcare staff to teach you, too.

Staying Healthy

Your baby's health depends a lot on how you take care of yourself during pregnancy. It's important to eat healthy food, exercise regularly, and get plenty of rest. It's best to avoid things that could harm your pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and illegal drugs.

Talk with your healthcare professional about any prescription drugs you are taking, as well as drugs you can buy without prescriptions, like vitamins and pain relievers.

Eating Well

Eating healthy food is good for your health and helps your fetus grow. This is the time to make the healthiest choices possible. Read the box "Making Healthy Food Choices" for advice.

MyPlate (www.myplate.gov) is a program that can help you plan a balanced diet. It takes into account your age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity.

