

PRENATAL VISIT

Pregnancy is an important time in your life. Your body will change as your baby grows and develops. It is an exciting time of growth and development for both you and your baby. Throughout your pregnancy, consider the baby's health since everything you do and eat affects the baby.

Most pregnancies last from 38-42 weeks, the average being *40 weeks or 9 months* (three trimesters). The first 13 weeks are called the 1st trimester, weeks 13-26/27 are referred to as the 2nd trimester, and the weeks 26/27-40 are referred to as the 3rd trimester. You were 2 weeks pregnant when you missed your last period. Your due date is determined from your last menstrual period. After conception, the fertilized egg travels down the fallopian tube and implants on the uterine wall. The placenta and the *amniotic sac* (water sac) begin to form at this time. The placenta is what connects baby to mother. Nutrients and oxygen pass from your bloodstream to the placenta. The placenta then exchanges nutrients and oxygen and goes to the baby's side of the placenta traveling via the umbilical cord to the baby. There is no exchanging of mother's blood and baby's blood. Waste products travel from the baby to the mother in the reverse order. Thirty percent of all pregnancies end in miscarriage and most do so during the first trimester. Often there is no medical reason found for the miscarriage.

What your doctor can do:

- The prenatal visits are usually once a month until the seventh or eighth month when they increase to every other week, and finally, every week during the ninth month.
- Your doctor may change the schedule of prenatal visits based on your health.
- A physical exam to follow growth and development and to detect any health problems early. At times, this may include a pelvic exam to determine the size of your uterus and your bone structure (pelvis).
- Urine tests to make sure your kidneys are not overworked during pregnancy.
- Blood tests, primarily to make sure you are not *anemic* (low blood count) and you are immunized against *Rubella* (German measles, a dangerous disease to get while you are pregnant)
- Check blood pressure.
- Record your weight. You should gain about 24-32 pounds during your pregnancy. Every woman is different and every pregnancy is different. Some women may gain as little as 15 pounds, some as much as 40 or more.
- Measure your belly to determine the size of your uterus. Your uterus grows as your baby grows.
- Check the baby's heartbeat. This is heard with a *Doppler* (an instrument to listen to sounds like heartbeats). A baby normally has a fast heartbeat.
- An ultrasound may be done to better determine your due date, determine the location of the placenta, and check the baby's brain, heart, and other organs for development

What you can do:

- Use the time with your doctor to discuss any questions you have concerning your pregnancy.
- Nutrition is an important part of your pregnancy. Your baby receives all of her nutrients from you. It is important that you eat wisely by choosing healthy foods. Your baby is completely dependent on the nutrition choices you make during your pregnancy. She needs good nutrition for good growth and development.

This material has been provided by your doctor as an educational tool and is not meant to take the place of professional care. Please consult your doctor for any questions, concerns or changes in your condition.

- Your doctor may prescribe prenatal vitamins during your pregnancy as well as an iron supplement.
- Avoid eating raw meat, drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes, or taking any unnecessary medication or drug, including illicit drugs and over-the-counter medicines. Consult your doctor prior to taking ANY medication. Some medication can have harmful effects on the developing baby.
- Exercise is very important during your pregnancy. If you have been on an exercise program prior to your pregnancy, continue with that program if your doctor says it is okay.
- If you were not on an exercise program prior to your pregnancy, you can begin one during your pregnancy. Your doctor will give you instructions on which type of exercises you may perform.
- As in many things, moderation is the best rule. Avoid high impact, bouncy, or sudden/jerky exercises during your routine.
- While you are in the car, be sure to wear your seatbelt low, below the uterus.
- Avoid straining or lifting things that are very heavy during your pregnancy.
- Avoid cleaning cat litter boxes or gardening/digging in soil that cats may have used. There are microorganisms in these items that can cause harmful effects to your baby that are lifelong.
- Avoid the use of Jacuzzis and saunas during pregnancy because the heat can be harmful.
- Be sure that you do not have any X-rays during your pregnancy.
- Taking acetaminophen (Tylenol) is normally safe. However aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), and naproxen (Aleve) should not be used during your pregnancy unless your doctor has approved it.
- Travel during your pregnancy is generally fine as long as your health permits. Be sure to stretch your feet during long trips.
- During the last 4-6 weeks, you should not travel more than one hour's distance from your doctor or hospital.

Contact your doctor if you develop any problems during your pregnancy.

Seek immediate medical assistance if you develop any of the following:

- *Spotting* (like a light period)!
- Any weight loss!
- Possible dehydration because of severe vomiting!
- Fever greater than 100!
- Severe headache not relieved with acetaminophen (Tylenol)!
- Abdominal Cramps!
- Sudden swelling of hands or feet!
- Fluid leakage (water breaks)!
- Regular contractions that get closer with time!
- If you do not feel your baby move for 2-3 hours (during the last trimester)!