

PREGNANCY AND SELF-CARE STRATEGIES

Getting good care before, during and after your pregnancy is very important. You can help your baby grow and develop, keeping you both healthy. It's the best way to make sure your baby has a good start to a healthy life.



PRENATAL CARE

Good prenatal care includes good nutrition, good health habits and seeing your health care provider. Here are some things you should do:

- **Choosing a provider:** you will need to choose a health care provider to take care of your prenatal care, delivery and postpartum care.
- **Take folic acid:** you should take a supplement with at least 400 micrograms (0.4 mg) of folic acid every day, it will reduce the risk of the baby developing certain birth defects.
- **Medications:** talk to your health care provider about any medications you take. This includes over-the-counter medications.
- **Avoid:** all use of alcohol, drugs, and limit caffeine.

- **Quit smoking:** if you smoke, you should quit.
- **Prenatal exams:** check with your health care provider about which tests you should have. Visits and types of tests vary, depending on your trimester.



DURING PREGNANCY

Your health care provider will talk to you about how to manage common discomforts of pregnancy such as:

- Nausea
- Back, leg and other aches and pains
- Sleeping problems
- Skin and hair changes
- Vaginal bleeding in early pregnancy

No two pregnancies are alike. Some women have mild symptoms, or very few symptoms during pregnancy.





COMPLICATIONS DURING PREGNANCY

Complications can occur during pregnancy, but it doesn't mean you won't have a healthy baby. Common complications include:

- Diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes)
- Blood pressure during pregnancy (preeclampsia)
- Problems with the placenta
- Vaginal bleeding
- Preterm labor
- The baby is not growing well or has health problems.



DELIVERY

Talk to your health care provider about what to expect during labor and delivery. Communicate your wishes about your birth plan, you can include things like:

- How you want to manage pain during labor, including whether or not you want to receive an epidural block.
- Your feelings about episiotomy (Incision made in the perineum).
- What would happen if you require a cesarean delivery.
- Have an assisted delivery with forceps or vacuum assistance.

- Who you want to be with you during labor.

It is also a good idea to make a list of things to bring to the hospital. Pack a bag ahead of time so that you will have it ready when labor begins.



AFTER THE BABY IS BORN

Having a baby is exciting and wonderful. It is also a lot of work, so you will need to take care of yourself in the first few weeks after delivery. The type of care you will need will depend on how your delivery went.

Learning the skills needed to breastfeed your baby can take 2 to 3 weeks. You need to learn to:

- Caring for your breasts
- Position of the baby for breastfeeding
- Overcoming any problems with breastfeeding
- Breast milk extraction and storage
- Skin and nipple changes due to breastfeeding
- The best time to breastfeed

If you need help, there are many resources available. Talk to your health care provider and use your support network such as family and friends.

Remember, the best tool before, during and after pregnancy is self-care and planning.

