



Pregnancy

Having a baby can be a wonderful experience, but it can also be a time of uncertainty. Many parents have questions and concerns as they face all the changes that pregnancy brings. With advice coming from everyone, it is tough to know who to listen to. That is why having accurate information is so important! It will help you to make good decisions about how to take care of yourself before, during and after your pregnancy.

My Health
Digest

Classic signs and symptoms of pregnancy

The most common early signs and symptoms of pregnancy might include:

- **Missed period.** If you're in your childbearing years and a week or more has passed without the start of an expected menstrual cycle, you might be pregnant. However, this symptom can be misleading if you have an irregular menstrual cycle.
- **Tender, swollen breasts.** Early in pregnancy hormonal changes might make your breasts sensitive and sore. The discomfort will likely decrease after a few weeks as your body adjusts to hormonal changes.
- **Nausea with or without vomiting.** Morning sickness, which can occur at any time of the day or night, often begins one to two months after you become pregnant. However, some women feel nausea earlier and some never experience it. While the cause of nausea during pregnancy isn't clear, pregnancy hormones likely play a role.
- **Increased urination.** You might find yourself urinating more often than usual. The amount of blood in your body increases during pregnancy, causing your kidneys to process extra fluid that ends up in your bladder.
- **Fatigue.** Fatigue also ranks high among early symptoms of pregnancy. No one knows for certain what causes sleepiness during the first trimester of pregnancy. However, a rapid rise in the levels of the hormone progesterone during early pregnancy might contribute to fatigue.

Other signs and symptoms of pregnancy

Other less obvious signs and symptoms of pregnancy that you might experience during the first trimester include:

- **Moodiness.** The flood of hormones in your body in early pregnancy can make you unusually emotional and weepy. Mood swings also are common.
- **Bloating.** Hormonal changes during early pregnancy can cause you to feel bloated, similar to how you might feel at the start of a menstrual period.
- **Light spotting.** Light spotting might be one of the first signs of pregnancy. Known as implantation bleeding, it happens when the fertilized egg attaches to the lining of the uterus — about 10 to 14 days after conception. Implantation bleeding occurs around the time you would expect to have a menstrual period. However, not all women have it.
- **Cramping.** Some women experience mild uterine cramping early in pregnancy.
- **Constipation.** Hormonal changes cause your digestive system to slow down, which can lead to constipation.
- **Food aversions.** When you're pregnant, you might become more sensitive to certain odors and your sense of taste might change. Like most other symptoms of pregnancy, these food preferences can be chalked up to hormonal changes.
- **Nasal congestion.** Increasing hormone levels and blood production can cause the mucous membranes in your nose to swell, dry out and bleed easily. This might cause you to have a stuffy or runny nose.



Medical Tests

Get important medical tests.

During your pregnancy, your doctor will recommend medical tests that all people need as part of routine prenatal care. You'll need to get some tests more than once.

These tests give your doctor important information about you and your baby. The tests will check your blood or urine (pee) for:

- Rh factor (a protein some people have in their blood)
- Hepatitis B
- Urinary tract infection (UTI)
- Syphilis
- HIV
- Signs of past rubella infections (German measles)
- Group B strep

Emotional health

Everyone has a different pregnancy experience. It is normal to experience a range of feelings, from happiness to worry and stress. Your emotional health is linked to your physical health so it is important to be aware of how you are feeling and get the support you need.

Important facts

- **Take care of your physical health to improve your emotional health.**

Your body is going through many physical and emotional changes. It is important to take care of yourself and figure out what you need to protect your emotional health. Eating well and staying active during your pregnancy can help regulate your mood. If you are feeling tired, try to take the time to relax and rest.

- **Share your thoughts and feelings with others.**

Try to be honest about your feelings. If something is bothering you, confide in your partner, friend, family member, health care provider or anyone you trust. Joining a peer support group for pregnancy can also be helpful as other expecting mothers can relate to your situation.

- **One in 10 women suffer from depression during pregnancy.**

Pregnancy can be an emotional time. Your moods change with your hormones, so it is okay to have negative feelings once in a while. Take the time to reflect on how you are feeling and learn



the signs and symptoms of depression. You could be depressed if you have 5 or more of these symptoms for more than 2 weeks:

- Feeling sad, worthless, anxious or guilty
- Crying more than usual
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Being very irritable
- Experiencing frequent mood swings
- Feeling very tired or restless
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Eating more or less than usual
- Lacking interest in the things you used to care about
- Having thoughts of death or suicide

Talk to your doctor if you think you may be depressed.

Healthy eating

Eating healthy means following a healthy eating pattern that includes a variety of nutritious foods and drinks.

Eat a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fat-free or low-fat dairy products, and protein foods.

Choose foods and drinks with less added sugars, saturated fats, and sodium (salt).

Limit refined grains and starches, which are in foods like cookies, white bread, and some snack foods.

If you are feeling sick, try eating a piece of whole-grain toast or whole-grain crackers.

Make healthy snack choices.

Examples of healthy snacks include:

Low-fat or fat-free yogurt with fruit (look for options with no added sugar)

Whole-grain crackers with fat-free or low-fat cheese

Carrots with hummus



Take a prenatal vitamin with folic acid, iron, and iodine every day.

Folic acid helps prevent some birth defects of the brain and spine.

Iron and iodine help keep you and your baby healthy.

Eat 8 to 12 ounces of seafood each week.

Fish and shellfish have healthy fats that are good for you and your baby. But some fish is high in mercury, a metal that can hurt your baby's development. It's a good idea to eat seafood that is high in healthy fats but lower in mercury.

Best choices

These choices are lower in mercury, so you can eat 8 to 12 ounces a week.

- Canned light tuna
- Catfish
- Cod
- Herring
- Oysters
- Salmon
- Shad
- Shrimp
- Tilapia
- Trout

Don't eat certain foods:

These foods may have bacteria in them that can hurt your baby. Stay away from:

Raw (uncooked) or rare (undercooked) fish or shellfish, like sushi or raw oysters

Soft cheeses (like feta, Brie, and goat cheese), unless they are pasteurized

Raw or rare meats, poultry, or eggs

Unpasteurized juices or milk

Lunch or deli meats, smoked seafood, and hot dogs – unless they are heated until steaming hot



Physical activity

Exercise is part of a healthy lifestyle and has many benefits in pregnancy.

Important facts

- **Exercise is safe and encouraged for healthy pregnant women who are receiving prenatal care.**

Exercise can:

- Help you sleep better
 - Improve your mood and energy level
 - Help prevent you from gaining excess weight
 - Help with constipation, backaches and bloating
 - Help you build strength for labour and birth
- **It is important to fuel your body, stay hydrated and avoid overheating.**

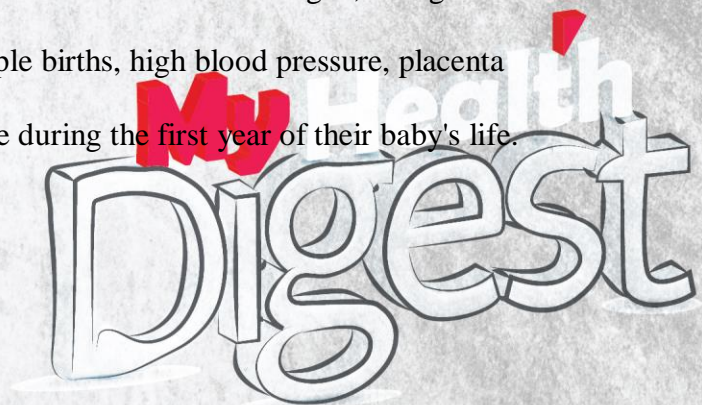
Eat a small snack 15 to 30 minutes before you exercise. Do not exercise on an empty stomach. Drink plenty of water before, during and after physical activity to avoid overheating and dehydration. Also, avoid being active outdoors on overly hot days.

Sexual health

Your baby is well protected by amniotic fluid and your uterus. Sexual activity will not harm your baby as long as you do not have complications such as preterm labour or placenta problems.

Important facts

- Your interest in sex may change during your pregnancy. Some women have higher desires during pregnancy, while others are less interested because of fatigue, changes to their body or nausea.
- If you have a pregnancy with risk factors (multiple births, high blood pressure, placenta previa), talk to your health care provider.
- Most couples resume an active sex life sometime during the first year of their baby's life.



Immunization

Vaccination is important for you and your baby before, during and after pregnancy. Vaccines protect you and your baby from serious diseases, some of which can cause life-threatening complications.

Important facts

- It is best to talk to a health care provider about vaccination when planning a pregnancy to review and update your vaccinations before becoming pregnant. You should be aware that there are routine vaccines recommended **before** and **during** your pregnancy.
- During **every** pregnancy, you should receive a Tdap vaccine that protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. The vaccine protects your baby against whooping cough (pertussis) after birth and before they can receive vaccines.
- Newborns can catch infections easily and have a higher risk of serious complications. When all family members' vaccines are up to date, you help protect them by preventing the spread of disease.

