

Connor Petri

Professor Kipple

CD D010

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Letter to Parent-to-be

Dear Prospective Parent,

Congratulations on taking your first steps toward the world of parenthood. To help you make your choice, here are some basic and helpful pieces of information to consider surrounding pregnancy.

Nutrition: Proper nutrition is essential during pregnancy. Malnutrition can cause complications such as low birth rate, birth defects, and a higher chance of infant mortality. Despite the saying “you’re eating for two now,” a pregnant woman only needs to consume an extra 300 calories per day.

Teratogens: Also known as outside influences, they are environmental agents that cause birth defects. These can be physical, like a high fever, infections, drugs, radiation, and exposure to hazardous chemicals. The effect of teratogens varies depending on timing, amount, and other factors related to exposure.

Maternal Illness: As mentioned above certain illnesses, such as gestational diabetes, hypertension, and infection can impact pregnancy. Gestational diabetes can lead to high birth weight and premature birth, and hypertension can raise the risk of a placental abruption and preeclampsia.

Drugs: Aside from those prescribed to you by your medical team and over the counter medications that are proven safe for pregnancy, drugs should not be used during pregnancy. Consuming alcohol can lead to fetal alcohol syndrome. Consuming tobacco increases the risk of low birth weight

and SIDS. Addictive illicit drugs are linked to miscarriage, brain damage, and neonatal abstinence syndrome.

Anxiety and Stress: High stress levels are directly linked to premature birth and low birth weight.

Indirectly, anxiety and stress can lead to high risk activities, such as drug use or drinking. Taking steps to manage your stress will be very important.

Physical Activity: While it is important to check with your doctor to ensure the exercise you are doing is safe for you and your little one, physical activity can help promote a healthy lifestyle and reduce anxiety and stress. This can overall reduce the risk of complications.

Prenatal Testing: The health of you and your little can be monitored for signs of complications in many different ways. For example, ultrasounds are a non-invasive way to check that things are as they should be. It works by sending out sound waves into the uterus and measuring how the sound is reflected back to the instrument. That data can be used to construct an image of the fetus without the need for invasive procedures.