

# PERFECT PREGNANCY GUIDE

*(...A COMPREHENSIVE LESSON NOTE)*

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## IMPORTANT TIPS & TRICKS

Let me once again welcome you to the course...thanks for staying on.

Since you've have been engaged with the main materials on the Course, we'd like to know how interesting the journey so far has been – do let us know using any of our contact in the Guide.

Now, here are a few tips that you'd definitely find to be helpful in pregnancy. These are the tips and tricks can help you stay fit during pregnancy.

### **TIP NUMBER #1 (ON THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLIC ACID):**

**Importance of Folic Acid: *Folic Acid has been recommended that women should start taking as early as 3 months before pregnancy.***

By taking Folic Acid you're helping your body create more red blood cells. Folic Acid also plays a very important role in the development of your baby's nervous system.

***Folate is the natural form of Folic Acid that you can find in food. Folic Acid is the manmade version you have in supplements.***

Also, during pregnancy, especially if you're anaemic, do well to take iron diets and supplements too.

There are multi-vitamins specifically for pregnancies either called prenatal or whatever brand you may be having (still refer to the module where we talked about some pregnancy supplements).

And these supplements usually contain both ***Folic Acid*** and ***Iron*** together.

### **TIP NUMBER #2 (ON LYING POSITION):**

Whenever you're going to sleep or to rest, try to lay down mostly on ***your left side*** and avoid laying down on your back.

Based on a study that came out of New Zealand, sleeping on your left side was associated with less still-births than sleeping in other positions, including on your back, and right side.

When lying, try to use a lot of pillows to both support your back as this will help the blood circulate through your body as well as help ease some of the pain that you might be feeling.

### **TIP NUMBER #3 (ON BLOOD CLOTTING);**

When pregnant, to decrease your chances of having your blood clot, especially if you're predisposed to one of the diseases that increased blood clotting, you should help your blood flow by getting up and going for a short walk of at least five times.

### **TIP NUMBER #4 (ON STAYING HYDRATED);**

**The importance of water:** try as much as possible to hydrate adequately at all times during pregnancy.

The best way to do this is to constantly have a bottle of water with you that you can carry around.

It is a fact that this makes you want to urinate a little bit more, and that can be a little bit discomforting, but keeping hydrated can help keep your blood pressure normal.

By drinking water constantly and urinating more often, you're also preventing a possible infection of the urinary tract.

**TIP NUMBER #5 (ON HEARTBURN AND CONSTIPATION):**

If you're really feeling heartburn like some pregnant women do, then you should try to avoid caffeine chocolate, and especially alcohol (or anything that contains such).

Planning your meal so that you eat smaller quantity more frequently throughout the day can really help to alleviate some of the symptoms of the digestive system that you may be feeling, like heartburn or constipation.

And after meals, it's great if you have a cup of hot water or tea.

These are the tips and tricks can help you stay fit during pregnancy.

# SOME CHANGES THAT THE BODY GOES THROUGH DURING PREGNANCY

Now recognizing and understanding these changes are important because it first helps us recognize what's happening to you. So you don't have to be stressed when you feel sort of different things during pregnancy.

And second of all, it can also help you deal with the changes and the side effects that come along with them.

Every person's body is different and every woman will feel these changes in a little bit of a different way.

We're going to talk about the general rules and things that you may feel. Some of them you may have experienced and some of them you may not.

And that's OK, everybody is different and every individual feels things differently.

These changes are based on two things.

**THE FIRST IS PHYSICAL:** Our abdomen and chest both contain the vital organs that help us eat and breathe and function daily.

So when a baby enters the womb it puts these organs to the side, giving them much less room.

That's one of the challenges.

**THE SECOND ONE IS HORMONAL/CHEMICAL:** These changes also have an effect on your body and how you operate daily.

In the course of our discussion, we're also going to talk about some tips and tricks that you can use to overcome these changes and some of the discomfort that the pregnancy might bring with it.

## LIGHTHEADEDNESS

During pregnancy the body creates a number of new blood vessels in order to supply oxygen to the placenta and to the growing baby.

Now the body takes a little bit more time in order to create actual blood cells. So at first the volume is increased.

This can lead to a drop in blood pressure in the first and early second trimester of pregnancy.

Now a drop in blood pressure can be dangerous because it can cause lightheadedness (a feeling that you might faint, occasionally accompanied by clouded vision and a loss of balance) and dizziness, especially when you go from sitting to standing.

Additionally, because the body needs more oxygen and there's a little bit blood, the heart has to work a little bit harder to pump it through the body.

This causes an increase in the heart rate, which can make one a little bit more tired. And when you walk, things that you could have done before more easily will cause you to tire out and feel your heart beating a little bit faster.

### **HERE'S A FEW TIPS AND TRICKS ON HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS LIGHTHEADEDNESS AND FATIGUE:**

1. The first important tip for you to remember is to stay hydrated. Keep a bottle of water with you at all times and constantly sip it throughout the day.

Now I know this makes you go to the bathroom a little bit more, but it's very important to stay hydrated during pregnancy especially early during the early parts of pregnancy.

2. The second tip is for you just sit down and have a drink of water if you feel a little bit dizzy especially after standing up, especially if this is early in pregnancy,

And if coffee is available you can also have a cup of coffee, just a little.

Caffeine increases your blood pressure and this can be good especially if you're feeling this lightheadedness and dizziness after standing up.

3. The last tip that I want to give you if you're feeling lightheadedness dizziness or that your heart is beating a little bit too fast is to take a break and ***lay down on your left side not on your back.***

Now, if you lay down on your back you may be obstructing some of the blood that's trying to flow back to the heart and make the heart work a little bit harder. This is why it's important to make sure you lay down on your left side and not on your back.

Let me just recap for you those three tips to help your blood flow:

- *The first is to stay hydrated and carry around a bottle of water with you at all times.*
- *The second if you're feeling lightheadedness or dizziness after you stand up is to sit back down and have a cup of water or if you can a cup of coffee to help the caffeine increase your blood pressure.*
- *Lastly, if you feel like your heart's beating a little bit too fast or that you're dehydrated or that your head's dizzy again laid down on your left side try to avoid laying down on your back.*

These tips are important to enable the blood flowing through the body and providing oxygen to all of the different parts.



# BREATHING: WHY IT IS SO HARD DURING PREGNANCY

While pregnant your body requires more oxygen. Naturally you have an instinct to breathe more and deeper breaths.

There are two things that make this a little bit harder.

***The first thing is that the womb grows***, which is a muscle. The uterus is a muscle, and that requires more especially when the mass increases.

***And second of all***, especially during contractions, the muscle requires energy which requires oxygen. So during contractions the amount of oxygen that your body needs increases.

So, breathing can become a little bit harder during pregnancy for two main reasons.

First of all, physically when you breathe you push down on your diaphragm.

But there's a baby pushing up on the other side, and this can make it feel harder to breathe.

The second reason is because of the estrogen flowing through your body.

Now estrogen is one of the hormones that increases during pregnancy. This can cause a little bit of swelling in the tissues especially in the breathing canal.

This can make your airways a little bit thinner and can also increase the feeling of difficulty you have when you're breathing.

The main tip that I have to overcome these breathing difficulties especially if there's an attack that you feel that you can't breathe ***is again to lay down on your left side and help your body return the flow of blood from your lower part of your body back to the heart.***

Doing this can make your breathing a little bit easier.

Now late in the pregnancy, around weeks 36 to 38, you might feel that your breathing gets easier as your baby drops down a little bit.

Now this is great because breathing becomes easier, but unfortunately that baby starts pressing on the bladder.

So it's changing one problem for another one.

But that's OK, at least the breathing problem will be solved at this point.

# ANAEMIA: MORE REASON TO FEEL FAINT AND WEAK

I want to take a moment to briefly mention anaemia.

Anaemia is a low haemoglobin count or that's what we measure when we measure our red blood cells.

Now, we mentioned previously the volume of our blood increases, but it takes time for us to build new red blood cells.

So even the volume increases, the concentration of red blood cells actually decreases especially early in pregnancy.

This can lead to the feelings of lightheadedness and faintness that we talked about earlier.

One of the other things that happens to our blood at this time is that it can enter a state of Aiguille ability.

This means that it's more likely to create blood clots at different parts of our body.

Now some people may have diseases like lupus or Abla that make this even more likely to happen.

And if you're predisposed to have one of these diseases, you should be aware of this already.

The first tip that I have is to make sure that you keep your blood flowing, although you may be tired and tempted to sit around all day, ***it's very important to get up and go for a walk.***

Even a very short walk around the block or even around the house because this creates a blood flow in the body and prevents the blood from clotting.

It's important to do this daily, even every couple hours.

Make sure that you get up and go for a short walk.

The next tip are these two very important supplements for women who are pregnant:

***The first are iron supplements.*** And you don't necessarily have to take an iron supplement as a pill although there are many prenatal vitamins that have iron in them but ***it's important to maintain a diet that is rather rich in iron.***

If you eat red meat, that's great because this is the best way to increase the amount of iron in our bodies. Another way to increase iron in our bodies is by eating dark green vegetables.

So make sure that you eat these foods quite a bit during pregnancy (refer to our earlier discussion on adequate diet).

The other supplement that I want to mention is ***Folic Acid.***

Now ***Folic Acid*** plays a number of roles; one of them is the building blocks of the cells of our body. So by taking ***Folic Acid*** you're also helping your body create more red blood cells.

***Folic Acid*** also plays a very important role in the development of your baby's nervous system.

There have been a number of studies just showing the benefits of ***Folic Acid*** during pregnancy.

**So all women are recommended to start *Folic Acid* supplements even three months before they're planning on getting pregnant.**

So make sure if nothing else you take ***Folic Acid*** supplements.

## FREQUENT URINATING

It's no secret that women during pregnancy have to go to the bathroom a little bit more or a lot more.

Now this can be for a number of reasons.

Maybe you're drinking more, and I hope that you are. But the amount of blood in your body is also increased and your kidneys are working overtime to filter that blood and turn it into urine.

The other obvious reason for going to the bathroom more is that the uterus is pressing on the bladder giving you the feeling that you have to go even if you only have a little bit in the bladder.

Now the problem is when the kidneys work overtime, there is an increased risk for urinary tract infections.

The most important thing to know here is that in order to prevent urinary tract infections you need to drink more and go to the bathroom frequently, even though it's uncomfortable.

But even as you're going to the bathroom frequently and thinking to yourself how bad it is, just remember that you're preventing urinary tract infections at that time.

Once during pregnancy (and it should be during the earlier weeks) you should get a screening test done to see if there's bacteria in your urine.

You may not have any signs or symptoms but this is a screening test that you should do anyway.

## THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM AT PREGNANCY

Unfortunately the digestive system takes a bit of a hit during pregnancy and this is for two main reasons.

***The first one being physical;*** the intestines of our body are used to just sitting in our abdomen comfortably, but during pregnancy when there's a growing baby inside of your stomach it pushes all the intestines to the side. And this can impair the motility.

***The second main reason is because of hormonal changes*** that the body goes through.

And specifically here we're talking about progesterone. Progesterone has an effect on smooth muscle and it causes it

to slow down the contractions ability and this can decrease motility of the digestive system which is not a good thing.

The first way that these changes can be felt during pregnancy is with heartburn; because of the decreased motility as food goes down the oesophagus it goes down a little bit slower.

And then we might feel that acid reflex, the acids for our stomach coming up a bit and causing heartburn.

The second manifestation is with constipation.

Now, because of the slower motility of system, food can take a little bit of a longer time to make its way through.

And this can cause it to harden up a bit.

Now this is a good thing because it gives your body more of a chance to digest the nutrients that you and your baby need.

But it's a bad thing because it causes a lot of discomfort especially when going to the bathroom.

### **There are a few tips and tricks that you can use to help overcome this discomfort:**

The first one is by splitting your meals up into smaller more frequent meals throughout the day.

This can really help deal with the heartburn. By eating smaller meals you're giving your body an easier time to digest it and much less of a load to digest.

And this can really help your digestive system.

The next tip which is also great for dealing with heartburn is to finish your small meals with a cup of hot water or tea.

This can really help to alleviate the heartburn you can feel after meals.

If your heartburn is still persisting, there's a few foods that you should try to avoid in order to help alleviate the discomfort.

These are foods like caffeine chocolate and alcohol.

You should be avoiding any weight during pregnancy if all of this is still not work. There's a few types of medication that you can take.

The main two types of medication for heartburn are H2 inhibitors or Proton Pump inhibitors. Now the second are usually **NOT** recommended for pregnancy. So make sure if you're taking medication it's from the type of the H2 inhibitors.

## MORNING SICKNESS DURING PREGNANCY

Now, the term '*Morning Sickness*' is a bit of a misleading name because it's nausea that can happen at any time of the day, not just in the morning.

Morning sickness is usually caused because of the fetal protein or HCG.

If you are having twins for example the foetal protein will be increased even more. And so you might feel even worse nausea than if you're just having one baby pregnancy.



Though this is individual and each person can feel it differently.

Another reason that's given for the *morning sickness* or for any nausea is if there's weight loss during the first trimester of pregnancy. So if you're losing weight it can really increase the feelings of nausea.

One best way to overcome this is what I previously mentioned; taking frequent meals and snacking throughout the day. But making sure that these meals are in smaller quantities.

This can really help to improve the feelings of nausea that you may be having. If the problem of nausea still persists and you're really not able to function throughout the day, there is a medication that you can take during pregnancy to try to help you. You can ask your doctor to prescribe; the medication comes mixed in with Vitamin B6. It's an over-the-counter drug that you can get at your local pharmacy.

So if you go on and ask them for it they'll definitely know what you're talking about.

## CHANGES IN THE SKIN DURING PREGNANCY

During pregnancy the skin goes through a number of changes that you should be aware of.

Stretch marks are the most obvious of this skin changes, and this happens partly due to the stretching of the skin as in the

name stretch marks, as the abdomen gets bigger. But it's also due to increased cortisol of levels.

Another manifestation of the skin that you might see during pregnancy is a dark line right about you in your midline crossing your bellybutton.

This is called a Linnaean Negro which is created from a hormone called melatonin. Melatonin crosses the placenta barrier. And so your baby might also have a negro if you have one. It's more prominent if you have dark skin.

Another thing that you can see on your skin is redness or spider like drawings of blood vessels on your stomach.

This is due to increased blood vessels that your body is making and it can also cause a little bit of discoloration around the vagina in the cervix.

Most of these manifestations of the changes of the skin will go way up to a few months after pregnancy.

One of the best tips for dealing with stretch-marks is to keep your cortisol levels low. And another way is to rub a little bit of almonds oil on your stomach. This can be done later on in pregnancy you don't have to start it from the beginning.

Lastly make sure you put on a hat and sunscreen when you go outside to protect your skin from the UV rays because this also has an effect on the changes of your skin.

# BACK PAIN DURING PREGNANCY

One of the changes that your body goes through which you feel and maybe bothers you the most is back pain, specifically lower back pain.

Now lower back pain happens for a number of reasons one of which is, as your abdomen grows it grows mostly forward pulling your centre of gravity forward to a place where it's not usually supposed to be.

Now this pulls the back vertebrae forward a little bit also causing a stress that you wouldn't have if you weren't pregnant.

Another reason for this pain is also a hormone called relaxin, that your body releases during pregnancy.

Now it's released to help the joints of your pelvis get a little bit looser as the pregnancy progresses but it also affects the vertebrae of your back, once again helping them push themselves forward putting stress on unwanted parts of your back of your back.

One of the best ways to deal with this while you're preparing for pregnancy is doing stomach exercises like platics and other exercises of that sort that can really help your supporting muscles and improve your back pain during pregnancy.

Two more tips that I want to talk about.

One is **Yoga** during pregnancy; helping your flexibility and your body move a little bit as you're pregnant can also help the back pain.

Lastly, as you sleep, the only way to be comfortable and I know it's very hard, is to sleep with a number of pillows putting one under your knees or hugging a pillow on your side.

Some of these tips can help you feel more comfortable.

Get better sleep and help the back pain.

Note: you that they're not supposed to make these symptoms and signs go away completely and make you not feel the pain and nausea or discomfort of pregnancy.

It's just supposed to help you ease some of these symptoms that you're feeling to help you through the pregnancy a little bit easier.

## WHEN YOU SHOULD GO TO THE HOSPITAL

There are other reasons for going to the hospital other than labour at due date, like signs that are worrisome or concerning to look for.

But for now, let's focus on when you should go to the hospital if you're ready to give birth, ***especially if this is your first child.***

The first part of birth which is the starting of the contractions can take a long time.

So the assumption is that you want to be as comfortable as possible during that time and stay at home for as long as possible while still getting to the hospital in time to play it safe and have some time to spare.

But don't take that risk because birth can start in a number of ways. The two main ones being spontaneous contractions and your water breaking.

Now you may have felt contractions throughout the entire pregnancy. Your body goes through sort of practicing contractions. Such is called Braxton Hicks contractions. But birth contractions are a little bit different.

Birth contractions are regular, meaning that ***they come at the same interval of time and there are three things that you should pay attention to.***

The first is that they are **increasing in frequency.**

The second is that **they are increasing in the time or the length of the contraction itself.**

And the third is that **they are increasing in the strength getting stronger with each contraction.**

Now, if your birth contractions have started, wait for them to be four minutes apart (was it up to four minutes it just ended before it started again?) and to last for one minute each (does the contraction stay up to a minute?). They might start slower than that and you can time this.

There are a number of Apps that you can download to time your contractions.

But remember four minutes between contractions and then one minute contractions.

If this is not your first birth then you should only have those type of contractions for one hour before going to the hospital because subsequent births tend to progress a little bit faster.

*If this is going on for two hours after two hours you should go to the hospital* if this is your first birth. However, by applying the techniques in my guide, you will not need to wait that long as your body would have been much ready and your baby can come out faster you anticipated.

So you don't want to wait some more.

Now, water breaking...

In almost every movie that I've seen, the woman is in sort of a unexpected place and all of a sudden the water comes spilling out all over the floor.

This actually happens in a **minority** of births, but it can actually happen.

There are two ways in which the water can break; ***one of them is coming out almost all at once***, and it will feel like you went to the bathroom but were unable to control it.

***The second one is, it can also break but slowly.*** There can be a gradual and continual dripping of the fluids.

So it may be so gradual that you're not sure if your water broke.

What do you do in this situation?

If this happens and you're not sure if your water broke or if it's dripping, go to the bathroom change so that there's a clean pad and then cough a few times.

You can also walk around with this pad for about 15 minutes and then, when you come back see if there is fluid gathered on the pad or if it's still dry if it's dry and there's nothing to worry about; the water hasn't broken yet!

But if it's continually wet, then your water is probably breaking and you should go to the hospital.

Alright...

Now, when you go to the hospital, if your water breaks, you can wait a little bit especially if your contractions haven't started yet, which is definitely possible.

But how long should you wait for? Well, you can wait for a couple hours taking time to shower. Pack your bag making sure all of your things are in order to get going.

But this is only on the condition that you look out for three things:

***The first thing is Meconium fluid.***

Now this is fluid which has a little bit of the faeces of the baby in it and it can be a worrying sign that can increase the risk of infection if the fluid is a little bit green or has particles floating around in it.

Then you probably shouldn't waste too much time before going to the hospital if the water breaks.

***The second thing is for fear of infection;*** if you are not feeling well yourself, if you have a fever or any other signs of

infection, then you should also not wait after your water breaks before going to the hospital.

***The third and last*** complication that I want to mention of water breaking before the contractions start ***is that the umbilical cord might get trapped.***

Now, this is a very rare complication. Sometimes you'll be able to feel it and sometimes even see part of it, though that probably won't be the case. It's good to know if this is happening.

Just be aware of the fact that there is a possibility.

So again, if your water breaks and there is no signs to worry about (the water is clear, it doesn't have any type of smell) you feel good. Then, depending on your distance from the hospital, you can take some time before going to the hospital, especially if your contractions haven't started yet..

### ***HERE'S A QUICK RECAP OF WHEN YOU SHOULD GO TO THE HOSPITAL***

If it's not your first birth, you may wait for four minutes between contractions one minute contractions, but ***after one hour of this you should go to the hospital.***

But if this is your first birth and you're having contractions, time them and wait till they're four minutes apart. Then one minute of contractions ***after this has happened for two hours you should go to the hospital.*** But if you have trained well with the guide I gave, you may need to get to the hospital earlier or call your midwife earlier (if you already have a special arrangement for the birth).



Then, in case your water breaks either shallowly or all at once, if there's no sign to worry about (fragments in the water or greenish water, fever or any fear of the umbilical cord being trapped) you should still go to the hospital within a few hours of this happening.

## SIGNS THAT YOU SHOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT AND GO TO THE HOSPITAL FOR

The first one is fresh blood.

If you see fresh blood at any time during the pregnancy you need to get this checked.

The placenta is something that forms and attaches itself to the wall of the uterus. And the uterus in your body creates blood vessels between the uterus and the placenta.

This is how it feeds the baby.

If there is any type of tear or break or detachment between the placenta and the uterus it can show itself with that gentle bleeding.

And so, if you see any signs of fresh blood you should go get this checked them.

***The next thing is with trauma*** or a fall or any type of accident that happens during pregnancy.

You should be aware that pregnant women are more prone to trauma especially as the pregnancy progresses third

trimester of pregnancy account for more than 50 per cent of the trauma that happen with pregnant women.

So this is something that you should be extra careful about especially when you're driving.

If you have any type of fall or car injury, even a light one, you should go to the hospital and make sure you get everything checked out.

Some women have high blood pressure during pregnancy.

And if you do you need to get the blood pressure checked a little bit more frequently.

If you feel some of these signs (severe headaches, blurred vision, dizziness) that's something that's also reason for concern because it can be risk for preeclampsia.

## **A FEW OF THE SIGNS THAT YOU SHOULD WATCH OUT FOR AND GO GET CHECKED OUT**

Your intuition is very strong during pregnancy.

So if you feel that something is not right even if you can't describe it in words you should probably go get it checked out anyway just to make sure that everything is OK.

There's nothing wrong with going to the hospital or to your physician's office to make sure that the pregnancy is progressing well and that there's no reason to be concerned.

# BABY MOVEMENTS DURING PREGNANCY

This is a very exciting time during pregnancy because it's something that you can share with loved ones around you by having them enjoy the feeling of someone kicking or moving your stomach a little bit. I would normally call my husband to come a see/feel. It is a wonder of God!

Now, baby movements during pregnancy normally start around week 24 or 25. You may start feeling it quite a bit earlier, though. But this is generally when it starts – around week 24 or 25. So, if yours haven't started, you now know why!

And should your pregnancy be up to 26 weeks and above and you haven't started noticing any form of movement, you need to go see the doctor.

Is that ok?!

Now, once you start feeling the movements of your baby you should be aware of them. Sometimes they may be a little bit uncomfortable but be aware that they're happening constantly and daily after meals or after sleep.

If there's any sudden drop or loss of movements, don't be concerned right away because it may be that the baby is sleeping or that you were preoccupied with something else and didn't notice the movements.

## **WHAT YOU DO IF YOU NOTICE A SUDDEN DROP IN MOVEMENTS**

If you notice a drop in your baby's movement, take something sweet or drink cold water (and the water has to be very cold) and then lay down ***on your left side*** for about half an hour (30 minutes) and concentrate on your stomach.

Concentrate on the baby inside and see if you can feel the movements while thinking about it.

Now, if your mind is preoccupied with something else you may not pay attention to feel the movements.

But if you pay full attention and after half an hour you didn't feel any movements, it is still OK do it again – eat something sweet again or drink another glass of very cold water and lay down for another half an hour on your left side.

Once again pay attention to movements concentrating. Don't be preoccupied doing something else.

If you've done this twice for two periods of half an hour after eating something sweet and drinking cold water and you still haven't felt movements, then you need to go check it out at the doctor's office.

At the hospital, you'll be given you a baby monitor and maybe an ultrasound to make sure that the heart is still beating normally and that everything is OK.

## **EXERCISES: WHAT YOU SHOULD DO, WHAT YOU SHOULDN'T DO AND WHAT'S RECOMMENDED**

And the general rule of thumb for exercise is that it depends on what you were doing before pregnancy to see what you should continue to do during pregnancy.

You need to keep your heart healthy during pregnancy.

You do this by doing cardio. Cardio can be done with swimming or walking. Anything that gets your heart beat up a little bit and keeps it up for about half an hour is just ok. The general recommendation is to get half an hour of cardio exercise done every day.

Pilate is a great form of exercise to do especially in the first trimester if you can a good guide.

During the second trimester it might start causing a little bit of stomach pain and this can be something that you want to avoid especially during the second and third trimester of pregnancy.

***What shouldn't you do.***

Even if you were doing it before pregnancy, you shouldn't be lifting heavy weights.

**PELVIC FLOOR, WHAT THAT MEANS, WHAT THE IMPLICATIONS ARE:**

Now the organs inside your pelvis are not very heavily attached to anything, but they're being held up by muscles just underneath them.

This is referred to as ***the pelvic floor***. It's talking about ***the floor*** holding up the organs in your pelvis.

If it gets too weak, which can happen over time, it can cause things like urinary incontinence. It can also cause prolapse of some of the organs to lay down though a little bit lower than they're used to, which can cause a few problems.

This is why it's so crucial to keep your pelvic floor intact.

Pilates when preparing for pregnancy is one of the great things that you can do with this. Another thing you can do however is to refrain from it being damaged or stretched too much uncontrollably.

***When does this happen?***

For example, if you need to sneeze and as you're about to let out a big heavy sneeze you keep it in; where does this pressure go to?

It's a bunch of pressure that's built up inside of you and it pushes down on the pelvic floor. Distending a little bit and this can make it weaker.

So, if you need to sneeze let it out. This is going to actually protect your pelvic floor.

If you have a bowel movement and you're pushing to get it out, especially if you constipated or it's a little bit harder bowel movement, you should never push without letting a little bit of air out of your mouth.

If you're pushing without letting air out of your mouth you're putting too much pressure on the pelvic floor.

So when you're going to the bathroom you can practice either letting a small sound, small low pitched sound like a little bit of air to reduce some of the pressure you're putting on your pelvic floor.

What about the pushing during the birth itself?

This is something that could damage the pelvic floor and if it gets damaged it could have implications for the rest of your life.

So when you're pushing as you're giving birth you want to have some sort of air or sound coming out of your mouth to make sure you're not putting too much pressure on the pelvic floor.

So as you're practicing in the bathroom you're actually practicing for the birth itself and pushing while you're giving

birth. *Again make a low pitched sound if you want to as you're pushing or let out a little bit of air.*

This is something that your partner can help you with as you're giving birth; they should be there to remind you not to push by keeping all of that pressure locked up inside of you but by letting out a little bit of air through your mouth with either a sound or just with the stream of air.

So make sure your partner is aware of this. As you're pushing, remember to keep your pelvic floor intact.

## **THE PREPARATION AND WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS WHEN YOU GO TO THE HOSPITAL TO GIVE BIRTH**

I'm going to mention a few of the things that you need to bring in the next chapter or go more thoroughly through a checklist to make sure that you're well-prepared and pack your bag as well as you should.

I want to go stage by stage what happens if you get to the hospital so that you know what to expect and what to ask for.

It's so important that you take control of what's happening, if not, the medical team at the hospital will just kind of tell you what to do and give you the recommendations, and you may not want everything that they'd recommend.



So it's important to understand the process and take control so that you know what you want, when you want and what your decisions are ahead of time.

Some people call this a birth plan and you can write this down but you don't have to.

It's just more important to be familiar with the process and to understand what you're going through and what you want specifically.

Alright.

Now, the first thing is when you're going to the hospital, do you have other kids at home that you need to watch.

Is there someone you can call for to come help them make sure all of these things are in order.

Around week 36 even to make sure that when the time comes you're ready to pick up and go, and you don't have to worry too much about the things around.

When you arrive at the hospital at reception, a few things will happen if you're ready to give birth.

The first thing is that they put an I.V. line inside your arm to give them a direct access to the blood flow.

And secondly, they'll usually give you a monitor on your stomach to monitor the baby's heartbeat.

Now some hospitals have monitors that are portable and not with wires attached to them that you can't move around.

If your hospital has this, make sure you ask for it so that you can continue to move around even as you're being monitored.

If your hospital doesn't have it that's ok; the monitor doesn't mean you can't move around.

You'll have to put it in a way that it's still comfortable for you to toss and turn. And make sure that you can keep the movement.

The I.V. line that they put in your arm you may not need it right away and you may not want it right away.

It's not very comfortable.

Some people feel uncomfortable because they can't bend their arm or move around freely.

You can ask to have the I.V. line put in a little bit later, depending on where you are in your contractions and with the dilation of the cervix.

If you still have a ways to go before the start of the **Active Birth** asked to delay the I.V. line so that you can walk around more freely.

And it's a little bit more comfortable.

Two more important things that you need to remember when going to a reception:

First of all if you're about to give birth, oftentimes this is when they register you to the ward. Now, depending on the hospital, there are different procedures and protocols as to how much separation you want from the baby.

Maybe you want to sleep at night afterwards and have the baby put with the other babies so that the nurses can take care of them, and that's OK.

But there are other places where there is zero separation and that you will not be separated all from your baby. This is mostly the case to avoid feeling that your child might have been mixed up somehow.

Secondly, different hospitals have different conditions in each delivery room. Some might have a natural delivery room. Some might have showers and some baths and others exercise balls depending on what facility you're going through.

And it's very important to familiarize yourself with the hospital so that you know what to ask for when you get to reception.

If there's room with showers or bath and you want that, make sure to ask for it. Or there's room with exercise balls and you want that, make sure to ask for it.

If there is a private room available to stay after delivery and that's what you want, make sure to ask for it. Of course, everything will go with your budget.

If you don't know to ask for it they might not give it to you automatically. So have these things in mind.

The bottom line is that you should be familiar with the facilities that you're going to use.

### ***Who's going with you to the hospital?***

So this is where your partner comes in.

Make sure there is a list of things that you know that you want and then your partner can make sure that all these things that you want will happen when you get there.

As your contractions are progressing great and your cervix is dilated and you're ready to go into the delivery room, what should you be thinking about or what should you plan for?

Who do you want there?

Do you want to go just with your partner, your spouse or your loved one? This will also depend on whether you are using a private delivery room or not. A mass delivery room will not permit your husband entrance for the privacy of other pregnant women there.

Maybe you want your mother or sister there with you.

You should think about this ahead of time and make sure that people know if they're coming in with you or if they're staying outside.

This is not a time for misunderstanding. It's a time with very high stress levels. So it's something that you should decide upon beforehand.

Next thing is the midwife that will be there with you, will be there constantly while a doctor might come in and out.

However, oftentimes, especially at university hospitals there can be a number of students walking around to learn.

You might feel comfortable with all of this but you might want more privacy in the room. And so this is something that you should establish ahead of time.

Again, with the high stress of the situation, your partner needs to know what you're planning on having and what you want so he can take control of this situation and make sure that only the people that you want in the delivery room are there.

***Then your vaginal examinations.***

The medical teams have a tendency to conduct frequently check to see how much the cervix is dilated or how the birth is progressing.

And this is ok to do a few check-ups at the beginning, but if you feel like it's a little bit excessive make sure you say something you want as few vaginal examinations during this time as possible to both help the birth progressed naturally as best as possible.

Make sure you or your partner will be there to say, maybe we don't need this final examination, *we just had one a couple of minutes ago or even half an hour ago. We don't need it so frequently.*

And then the medical team will listen to you know during the birth.

Going further into the delivery proper, it's very common for some stool to get out of the rectum as you're pushing.

This is very common, and nobody in the room should get excited if this happens because of how common it is.

However, there are women that try to prevent this by giving themselves an enema ahead of time. And it's something that you can buy at your local pharmacy.

This is something you can discuss with your doctor if you want.

And so when you go into the delivery room or when your contractions start then you can give yourself the medication and clear out your bowels.

## THE CLOTHES THAT YOU WEAR

It is very common when women go to the hospital to just take the hospital robes that are given to them because that's what people do.

Right?

Well, today you can buy clothes that are a little bit more comfortable for you for very inexpensive prices to come to give birth in instead of the hospital robe.

Now if that is what you choose to do, it's better if you go for a skirt and a shirt because you might have to lift up your shirt to put the monitor on your stomach.

So keep that in mind.

However, a cheap dress that is comfortable for you and it works. This can be something that will be much more comfortable than the hospital robe that they give to you. And it might make you feel better as you're giving birth as well.

So keep this in mind if you want to bring some of your own clothing to give birth; it might be a one-time use of a thing.

# ROOM ATMOSPHERE FOR DELIVERY

It helps to know that what progresses the contractions is a normal cold oxytocin or the hormone of love so to speak. And what restricts the contractions from progressing as should is the stress hormone called cortisol.

How do you make sure that there's more of the relaxing love hormone and less of the stress hormone?

You keep the room with the calming atmosphere. And one way to achieve that is through music; when you play some kind of soft music.

Outside music, think of anything that relaxes you or anything that puts you in a frame of mind to stay as relaxed as possible.

Now lastly and this might be even a little bit before the delivery room is the types of anaesthesia that you get.

Now some women prefer to give birth naturally without any type of painkillers so that they can feel the birth.

This is great but there's nothing wrong with choosing one of the types of anaesthesia that will help you through the birth.

There are three main types that are used.

The first is laughing gas. Laughing gas can help you with the pains of the contractions.

It's a very type of superficial so doesn't go into the placenta. It just stays in the lungs and then gets into your head, easing the pain levels.

There's another type of anaesthesia that you can take which is I.V. They give it to you through the line in your arm straight into the blood.

However this is rarely given because it also goes through the placenta and so it gets to the baby as well.

The most common and effective type of anaesthesia that is given is called epidural. This is a little bit misleading because epidural is actually a layer in your nervous system that the painkillers are given to.

It is not the name of the material itself that's given.

If you get epidural you have to be careful because it has some side effects. It is one of the things that can cause falls. So if you have to go to the bathroom make sure that you are assisted. And you have to stay on your bed at all times.

If you're given an epidural, there are some complications because you're putting a needle into your back, so it can hit different parts of the nervous system, rarely causing paralysis. But it can cause temporary paralysis which can lead to falls, and this can be dangerous.

So once again, if you're taking epidural, make sure that you have someone watching to support you in case of falling when you have to stand.



# OTHER THINGS THAT YOU NEED TO BRING TO THE HOSPITAL WITH YOU.

Let's start with things you need to make an atmosphere you want to give birth in, that you should bring with you.

One is a Bluetooth speaker or something that can help you listen to music. If you have a playlist on your phone, that's cool. But make sure you bring a charger for your mobile devices and that they don't run out of batteries during the crucial moment.

Another thing is food and water.

The time that you spend in the hospital can be longer than anticipated and you don't want to be eating junks for a long time.

So make sure there is a provision on ground for real meal and some.

Next is clothing.

Part of what we mentioned earlier was a dress (a skirt and a shirt) that you want to wear to give birth. And remember, don't spend too much money on this because you might not need to wear it again.

So that's number one on clothes – what you give birth in. Number two, for your partner or whoever else is in the room, you may want to bring a sweater or something to dress warmly. Never underestimate how warm pregnant women can feel and how much they'll want to turn down the heat in the room. So anybody not giving birth might feel very cold.

Along the lines of clothes I want to mention the baby's clothes. You might want to bring a few outfits with you to dress your baby in the first few days of his life.

Now remember this can be something to keep the baby warm. So, know what to include in the baby's first few outfits that you bring to the hospital with you, and also consider that you might be in the hospital for two or three days. So, it's important to bring adequate and comfortable clothes for this time.

You might want to also bring for yourself clothes that make you feel a little bit better afterwards as well. Make sure that there are clothes that can fit a few sizes because you don't know exactly what size you'll be after giving birth. It might be somewhere where you were during the six month of pregnancy.

Also make sure you bring enough underwear as this gets changed very often. Bleeding often continues for up to a few weeks after giving birth.

A closed bottle of olive or almond oil will usually be in the list of items for giving birth. This is something that could help the midwife deliver the baby and prevent tears in the perineum, if you have done your other homework well (See ***Childbirth Without Injuries*** Guide to understand what I mean)

So put a closed bottle of the oil in your bag and give the midwife will request for it (alongside other things in the list of things like pads, disinfectants, cottonwood and the rest you need during birth) as you enter the delivery room. They already know what to do with it.

***The baby's car seat*** is you have a car. You don't need this while coming to the hospital, but you'll definitely need it to leave the hospital.

So either have somebody that can bring it for you while you're there or you can put it in the car ahead of time so that when you leave the hospital it will be ready to go.

Then, make sure that you have all of the ***medical information that you need.***

This, depending on what hospital and depending on what system you are in, comes in different forms whether it be a card or your papers your check-ups.

But make sure that all the information is with you when you go to the hospital to give birth. A great place to leave it is in the bag that's ready to go.

And then you don't even have to remember to put it there – so try to keep it there ahead of time. And when you get to the hospital and they ask for the information you can get it all ready to go.

***Lastly, hand towels.***

Bring for yourself a few hand towels because, when you're in the delivery room one of the best things to do is keep a warm hand towel either on your stomach or on your back.

If there's no warm water available, then wet the towel or you can put it in the microwave (if available) for a few for a few seconds to heat it up.

This is one of the most relaxing things and one of the things that can help you during the delivery.

All right there you have it.

This is the ultimate packing list that you should prepare in a bag before you're ready to give birth.

Do it somewhere around week 36 or 37 and have the bag ready to go so you don't searching around the house for the

essential items when you're about to rush to the hospital to give birth.

## **TECHNIQUES THAT YOU CAN USE TO GET YOURSELF THROUGH THE PAIN AND DISCOMFORT OF CONTRACTIONS**

Now contractions can happen all throughout the pregnancy and the type is the Braxton Hicks contractions which we mentioned earlier.

There are great techniques to help you get through the birth contractions when the big moment finally arrives.

Now the best way to get through contractions is to first of all be in a place that is most comfortable for you.

And this is probably your home, before going to the hospital.

So if you can stay at home for as long as possible before going to the hospital and making sure there's adequate time before the birth, that's probably best. That also means you must make your home a comfortable place to stay, with the right atmosphere you create.

May I suggest you go through this part of the discussion together with your partner so both of you can learn about the techniques involved and he can learn how to help you with getting through contraction.

Now the techniques focus on four main points.

The first one is ***Breathing***.

You have to make sure that you keep breathing, slowly and calmly, to get oxygen to your body as you're going through contractions.

Contraction is the muscles of the uterus contracting or being used. And when a muscle uses energy it means more oxygen is required.

Some people because of the pain tend to freeze up.

Your partner can remind you to breathe by showing you how to keep exhaling slowly. If you exhale slowly together, that will get you into a rhythm of breathing slowly and circulating that oxygen through your body to help you with these contractions.

So make sure you remember to breathe and if your partner sees that you're not breathing slowly and properly, he should show you by exhaling slowly, reminding you to breathe.

Number two is ***Movement***.

The next technique (technique two) is ***Movement***, and there are a few of them in this type of category. But we're going to talk about movement between contractions to help you get through them.

Now it's best not to lay down in your back. That's probably the worst thing that you can do during contractions, to help them progress and help ease you through the pain.

But you want to be up, kind of shaking your pelvis a little bit from side to side doing figure eights and making sure that

your pelvis and your body constantly move to help you with the contractions.

There are three main techniques of movement that partners can do together.

The first one is with *standing up*.

The woman will stand up beside the wall with her hands on the wall up as she's leaning on the wall. Then her pelvis should be moving with small and gentle figure in a motion and her partner can then come from behind her and give her a hug from behind, placing his hands on the bottom of her stomach.

Now it's very important to be with good communication to make sure that she knows what's good for her and what hurts.

If there's anything hurting a little bit the partner should make sure he doesn't do that.

While hugging her from behind and holding the bottom of the stomach you can help by lifting up the stomach a little bit, taking away some of the pressure that she's feeling on her stomach and her back.

This specific exercise is especially good if the woman is experiencing either lower abdominal pain or lower back pain.

The next motion is when the woman leans over, resting her forearms on a surface so that she can bend over comfortably, leaving her stomach hanging down.

As the woman is leaning forward resting on her foreheads, you (the partner) can also help her do the motions of the figure eights gently with the pelvis.

Remember keeping movements side by side.

Figure eights constant movement is something that really helps progress the contractions. The partner's job in this exercise is to take the hands and give some pressure on the lower back.

Talk to the woman to make sure where it feels best for her and where it helps her the most, making sure that you're not pushing down too hard. This exercise is especially good for lower back pain.

The last part of movement we will talk about is the exercise ball. An exercise ball can especially help if there's pelvic pain.

Some delivery rooms today have an exercise ball in them that a woman can sit on during contractions. As she's sitting, the partner or whoever came to the hospital with her should make sure that she doesn't fall by accident.

Also, there should be motions of figure eights forward and back, side to side, constantly creating that movement that helps progress the contractions.

So, the three types of movement are ***either standing up leaning forward or you are resting on your forearm or sitting on an exercise ball.***

The next technique to help with contractions is touch.

Now touch especially between two partners, skin to skin contact either hands on the arm or on the back can really help release oxytocin of the body.

Recall the love hormone which we mentioned before and now oxytocin helps progress the contractions and to reduce the cortisol which is something that prevents the contractions.

But while some people might really enjoy the feeling of touch of their partner, their mother or that of a loved one, others might not want to be touched at all when in pain.

So make sure that there's a lot of communication to see what's good for her.

The fourth and final point of dealing with contractions is the atmosphere that you create.

Again, you want to reduce stress as much as possible to lower the cortisol levels during this time.

How do you create the atmosphere that helps? We talked about music that's relaxing. Some use dim lighting to help condition the atmosphere. You can also achieve this by speaking in a slow low toned cool and calm voice.

The partner should help make sure everything is calm and that everybody in the room is concentrated and focused on helping the woman calmed down and relax.

If there's someone in the delivery room causing unwanted stress get them out of the delivery room. They don't need to be there, especially if they're causing stress.

So make sure that you create an atmosphere that is as relaxing as possible.



So, a calmed atmosphere is the fourth and final point of dealing with contractions.

All of these four points are applicable both at home when dealing with contractions before the birth (during the Braxton Hicks contractions) and in the delivery room when dealing with contractions.

You can practice these different types of movements and atmosphere and techniques that we talked about all throughout the pregnancy.

You and your partner can learn to practice them with fun.

## **RIGHT AFTER THE DELIVERY**

Right after the baby comes out, hopefully you hear that first breath of air and the crying starts immediately.

This is one of the most exciting times I know for my first baby. It was definitely one of the most exciting times of my life.

Once the baby gets cleaned off a little bit with a few towels the first thing that should happen after being born is skin to skin contact with the mother.

Skin to skin contact is one of the healthiest things for both the mother and the baby.

It really helps with the breastfeeding.

And this is something that you should do also in the delivery room, to have the baby lay there for about half an hour with skin to skin contact before you try breastfeeding.

And then you can try it for the first time.

The amazing thing about this process is that it works with the father too. At the first days in the hospital or straight in the delivery room the baby can be put skin to skin also with the father and this can have a similar effect on the baby and the father, creating an amazing connection between the two.

You should remain in the delivery room for about two hours after you give birth.

Every hospital is a little bit different. So make sure that you know the protocols and that you won't be surprised after giving birth.

Make sure that you know how long you can stay there and have that intimate moment with your family or with whichever loved ones you choose to have there with you.

Stay there for about two hours with the baby skin to skin contact and enjoy the first moments of this new child's life.

***Now there are certain cases where the women can bleed a little bit or even a lot after giving birth.***

There's been a study showing that if a woman bleeds seriously more than a litre and a half it can impair her ability to breastfeed.

***But the interesting thing about this study is that the reason why her breastfeeding ability was impaired was because of the separation from the baby.***

So even if there is a problem with bleeding, even if the woman has to go to a procedure, having the baby close to the Father or trying to eliminate that separation as much as possible can really help for the breastfeeding afterwards.

If breastfeeding is a little bit tougher as the day goes on or in the next day. Keep up with that skin to skin contact for about half an hour before trying to breastfeed.

Lastly, to control the bleeding there's a number of steps and a number of things that can be done.

They can make sure that all the parts of the placenta are out. That's a common reason why the woman can bleed after giving birth, but bleeding is very normal.

You should try to wait as much as possible try to encourage the medical team to wait before giving a shot of something like Pitocin which is an analog of oxytocin and this is something that encourages the uterus to crunch up and contract, getting rid of the bleeding.

## **THE FIRST TREATMENTS THAT THE BABY NEEDS**

At the hospital there are a few treatments that the medical team will recommend for your baby.

It's important to understand which of these treatments you want and which you don't want to take control and that you had the experience that you choose.

The first one is the amount of separation between you and your baby.

We mentioned that you should start breastfeeding in the delivery room after about half an hour of skin to skin contact.

If breastfeeding is a little bit tougher as the day goes on or in the next day, keep up with that skin to skin contact for about half an hour before trying to breastfeed.

The next point is about giving the baby a shower.

It's quite common for all the babies in the hospital to have a shower while they're there.

A baby doesn't need a shower in the first couple of days of its life unless there's a specific reason.

If there was ***Meconium fluid*** that was coming out or if there's a risk of infection or any reason like that, there is no need to give a baby a shower. So if you choose not to this is perfectly acceptable.

A baby is comfortable in the fluid that they come out with. But can just try to clean the baby with baby wipes or a towel. However, leaving a little bit of fluid can help the baby accommodate into a new environment.

As the baby comes out, one of the options is to give them antibiotic on their eyes.

This can be good if there's any risk of infection from the mother, like any risk of STDs, chlamydia, gonorrhoea etc. If you have any risk for these things, it's important that you give the baby the antibiotic that the medical team will recommend.

If however there is no risk of these things then you can avoid giving the baby the antibiotic.

There's no side effect to it, It's just a little bit of discomfort.

But if you have absolutely no risk of infection, then you don't have to give the antibiotic or the medical team won't even recommend such.

The next option that the medical team will recommend is vitamin K for the baby right after it comes out.

Now, this is given in two forms – either with an injection or as drops.

Injection could be recommended by the medical team. What matters the most is that this is given to the baby!

Vitamin K is very important because it plays a role in the coagulation and the blood clotting of the baby.

Don't give up on this. It is highly recommend that don't give up on the vitamin K.

***Next is Hepatitis B vaccinations:*** some places give babies Hepatitis B vaccinations right at the delivery room after birth.

So, if you have any risk for hepatitis B you should give your baby a vaccination at birth because this will prevent him from developing a chronic infection.

But if you live in a place where there is no Hepatitis B endemic or that you don't have any chances of having hepatitis B, then you don't have to give the baby this vaccination right away. You can do it at one month or two months old during check-ups.

Lastly is checking for a number of metabolic diseases depending on where you live in the world. This is done with an easy blood test of the baby, and it could help prevent some serious complications in the rest of the baby's life.

So, those are the main treatments that the medical team will offer your baby in the hospital and that you should be aware of to ensure nothing is left out that needed to be done.

Remember that it might be hard to engage the medical team to discuss your concerns, or you might not get that special attention as there are many other women to also cater for. (But in the Guide on ***Childbirth Without Injuries*** I gave a clue what to do).

## RHESUS FACTOR

When pregnant, an RH Antibodies test will be performed. It can be a problem during delivery or even during miscarriage (or abortion) because your body may produce antibodies to protect itself from this foreign substance.

If your partner's blood is RH Positive and yours is RH Negative, this constitutes a challenge. It is a phenomenon called RH incompatibility. Where such is the case and you are pregnant, then you will be given the first RH Immune Globulin injection during 28 weeks of your pregnancy, to prevent the development of antibodies that could be harmful to your baby. This injection is also given with 72 hours of putting to bed, if your baby has RH Positive blood.

You are also going to receive this injection during invasive procedure and if you have any significant bleeding during pregnancy.

## **FOR MORE RESOURCES, VISIT:**

### **3 Great Ways To Lower The Effects Of Anemia During Pregnancy:**

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<https://medscreen.blog/2018/06/03/3-great-ways-to-lower-the-effects-of-anemia-during-pregnancy/>

### **The #1 Tip For Women Who Plan on Breastfeeding:**

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<https://medscreen.blog/2018/07/11/the-1-tip-for-women-who-plan-on-breastfeeding/>

### **How do you know if you're pregnant? Practicing cautious optimism:**

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<https://medscreen.blog/2018/07/04/how-do-you-know-if-youre-pregnant-practicing-cautious-optimism/>

**Snowballing ourselves into  
happiness, and health with  
serotonin:**

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<https://medscreen.blog/2018/02/18/snowballing-ourselves-into-happiness-and-health/>

**Pregnant women need to make sure  
they check for asymptomatic  
bacteriuria – Here's what that  
means:**

<https://medscreen.blog/2017/05/18/asymptomatic-bacteriuria/>

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**The 10 Commandments For  
Husbands In The Delivery Room:**

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<https://medscreen.blog/2018/06/26/the-10-commandments-for-husbands-in-the-delivery-room/>



**If You Have The Stomach Flu And  
You're Pregnant, You Should Know  
About This:**

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<https://medscreen.blog/2018/05/24/if-you-have-the-stomach-flu-and-youre-pregnant-you-should-know-about-this/>

**Injuries and trauma during  
pregnancy: What to watch out for:**

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<https://medscreen.blog/2018/05/04/injuries-and-trauma-during-pregnancy-what-to-watch-out-for/>