

You and Your Baby Share Everything



Make Good Choices during Pregnancy

Why Your Baby Thrives When You Make Healthy Choices

Your body will nurture your baby throughout your pregnancy, so everything you do to stay healthy will also help your baby's healthy development. You can't control everything, of course, but you may be surprised at all of the healthy choices that are in your control.

Making Improved Lifestyle Changes

Prenatal care

One of the most important things you can do for yourself is find a good healthcare provider for the duration of your pregnancy. What are some of the things that you should expect from a good provider?

- Go over your complete medical history (including family history) to see if there are any conditions that need to be monitored or treated for a safer pregnancy
- Options to receive prenatal vitamins (even if you have a healthy diet)
- Get a physical exam (which will include a pelvic exam, urine sample, blood work, and an ultrasound)
- If you're anxious, worried, or feeling overwhelmed, please share this with your provider; these are all natural feelings, and your healthcare provider may have suggestions for helping you cope with these emotions

Nutrition

Even if you eat healthy now, there may be better choices you can make when you're pregnant. You may need to consume more calories, but you want to make sure the additional calories are healthy and nutritious.

Here are some examples of foods suggested by researchers, which could be great for you and your baby:¹

- Calcium-rich foods (also a good source of iodine)
- Dark leafy greens
- Foods high in fibre
- Foods high in vitamin A (carrots, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, spinach, water squash, turnip greens, beet greens, apricots and cantaloupe)
- Foods high in vitamin C (oranges, grapefruits, strawberries, honeydew, papaya, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, green peppers, tomatoes and mustard greens)
- Foods that are a good source of folates (dark green leafy vegetables and legumes such as lima beans, black beans, black-eyed peas and chickpeas)
- Iron-rich foods

Exercise

Maintaining a regular exercise routine throughout your pregnancy may help with maintaining a healthy weight and may help decrease common discomforts of pregnancy including backaches and fatigue. Physical activity can also help relieve stress. There is also some evidence that exercise can prevent gestational diabetes (diabetes that develops during pregnancy).

Always check with your healthcare provider before starting or increasing your exercise program. Your doctor may advise you not to exercise if you have conditions like bleeding or spotting, a weak cervix or a history of early labour.

Facing More Difficult Lifestyle Changes

Some lifestyle changes may be easy to make. Some may be harder, but the harder changes may also be the ones that make the biggest difference.

Drinking, smoking, and drugs

When you're pregnant, everything that goes through your adult systems—heart, lungs, liver, etc.—also goes through your baby's developing organs. Exhaustive research has shown the harmful effects on your baby's development if you drink, smoke, or take drugs (including prescription drugs, if your doctor has not cleared them as safe for your unborn child).

Even if you consider yourself a casual user of any of these substances, they can be dangerous to your unborn child causing premature birth, birth defects and even death.^{3,4,5} The only safe choice for these substances is to stop completely—before, during, and after your pregnancy.^{3,4,5}

Environmental contaminants

When you're pregnant, substances that may not harm you as an adult can be toxic to your unborn child. Avoid working with or handling things like:

- Garden products, such as fertilizers
- Insecticides
- Cat faeces (let someone else clean out the litter box)
- Cleaning products with ammonia and chlorine
- Lead

Weight

There's no ideal weight for your pregnancy, but there are general guidelines (weight ranges) that will give you an idea of what is normally healthy or unhealthy. Being either underweight or overweight can create problems during your pregnancy. It's important to manage your weight throughout your pregnancy and maintain a healthy weight even as your pregnancy progresses.

For an idea of healthy weight ranges, read *Maintaining a Healthy Weight* in the free booklet, *Healthy Pregnancy, Healthy Baby*.

To access your copy,

¹ Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics, "Nutritional and clinical associations of food cravings in pregnancy," June 2016

² World Journal of Diabetes, "Prescribing physical activity to prevent and manage gestational diabetes," December 2013

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Advisory on Alcohol Use in Pregnancy," 2005

⁴ Surgeon General, "The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress," 2014

⁵ Creasy and Resnik's Maternal-Fetal Medicine: Principles and Practice, "Substance abuse in pregnancy," September 2014

⁶ World Health Organization, "Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health," June 2015

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