Pregnancy

If you are planning on getting pregnant, it is a good idea to make a preconception appointment with your caregiver to discuss having a healthy lifestyle before getting pregnant. Such as, diet, weight, exercise, taking prenatal vitamins especially folic acid (it helps prevent brain and spinal cord defects), avoiding alcohol, smoking and illegal drugs, medical problems (diabetes, convulsions), family history of genetic problems, working conditions and immunizations. It is better to have knowledge of these things and do something about them before getting pregnant.

In your pregnancy it is important to follow certain guidelines to have a healthy baby. It is very important to get good prenatal care and follow your caregiver's instructions. Prenatal care includes all the medical care you receive before your baby's birth. This helps to prevent problems during the pregnancy and childbirth.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Start your prenatal visits by the 12th week of pregnancy or before when possible. They are usually scheduled monthly at first. They are more often in the last 2 months before delivery. It is important that you keep your caregiver's appointments and follow your caregiver's instructions regarding medication use, exercise, and diet.
- During pregnancy, you are providing food for you and your baby. Eat a regular, well-balanced diet. Choose foods such as meat, fish, milk and other dairy products, vegetables, fruits, whole-grain breads and cereals. Your caregiver will inform you of the ideal weight gain depending on your current height and weight. Drink lots of liquids. Try to drink eight glasses of water a day.
- Alcohol is associated with a number of birth defects including fetal alcohol syndrome. It is best to avoid alcohol completely. Smoking will cause low birth rate and prematurity. Use of alcohol and nicotine during your pregnancy also increases the chances that your child will be chemically dependent later in their life and may contribute to SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).
- **Do not** use illegal drugs.
- Only take prescription or over-the-counter medications that are recommended by your caregiver. Other medications can cause genetic and physical problems in the baby.
- Morning sickness can often be helped by keeping soda crackers at the bedside. Eat a couple before arising in the morning.
- A sexual relationship may be continued until near the end of pregnancy if there are no other problems such as early (*premature*) leaking of amniotic fluid from the membranes, vaginal bleeding, painful intercourse or belly (*abdominal*) pain.
- Exercise regularly. Check with your caregiver if you are unsure of the safety of some of your exercises.
- **Do not** use hot tubs, steam rooms or saunas. These increase the risk of fainting or passing out and hurting yourself and the baby. Swimming is OK for exercise. Get plenty of rest, including afternoon naps when possible especially in the third trimester.
- Avoid toxic odors and chemicals.
- **Do not** wear high heels. They may cause you to lose your balance and fall.
- **Do not** lift over 5 pounds. If you do lift anything, lift with your legs and thighs not your back.
- Avoid long trips, especially in the third trimester.
- If you have to travel out of the city or state, take a copy of your medical records with you.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop an unexplained oral temperature above 101° F (38.3° C), or as your caregiver suggests.
- You have leaking of fluid from the vagina. If leaking membranes are suspected, take your temperature and inform your caregiver of this when you call.
- There is vaginal spotting or bleeding. Notify your caregiver of the amount and how many pads are used.
- You continue to feel sick to your stomach (*nauseous*) and have no relief from remedies suggested, or you throw up (*vomit*) blood or coffee ground like materials.

- You develop upper abdominal pain.
- You have round ligament discomfort in the lower abdominal area. This still must be evaluated by your caregiver.
- You feel contractions of the uterus.
- You do not feel the baby move, or there is less movement than before.
- You have painful urination.
- You have abnormal vaginal discharge.
- You have persistent diarrhea.
- You get a severe headache.
- You have problems with your vision.
- You develop muscle weakness.
- You feel dizzy and faint.
- You develop shortness of breath.
- You develop chest pain.
- You have back pain that travels down to your leg and feet.
- You feel irregular or a very fast heartbeat.
- You develop excessive weight gain in a short period of time (5 pounds in 3 to 5 days).
- You are involved with a domestic violence situation.

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