

Give Your Baby the Best Possible Start

START SMART FOR YOUR BABY®
OUR PROGRAM FOR PREGNANT PEOPLE



Here for You and Your Baby – Every Step of the Way

A healthy pregnancy should be the goal of all expecting parents and families. That means information, resources, and a true partnership to help ensure you and your baby get what you need to make a smart start on your journey.

Your Health Net health plan may include Start Smart for Your Baby[®], a program for pregnant people, including follow-up after the baby is born. We want to help you take care of yourself and your baby through the whole process.

Get Started

Find pregnancy support for you and your baby

Go to your doctor as soon as you think you are pregnant

If you need help finding a doctor or making an appointment, call us at **888-893-1569 (TTY: 711)**.

Meet our care managers

Our care managers are nurses and social workers who can give you customized support, before, during, and after your pregnancy. They can help you find resources and support your doctor's plan for care. If you want to speak with a care manager, call us at <the number on the back of your member ID card>.

Prenatal care

First things first

It is important to see your doctor as soon as you think you are pregnant. Studies¹ show that getting prenatal care early can help you have a healthier baby.

Regular doctor visit

It is important to go to all of your prenatal visits, even if you are feeling well. Your recommended prenatal visits will be:

- 1. Every 4 weeks during the first 32 weeks**
- 2. Every 2 to 3 weeks from 32 to 36 weeks**
- 3. Every week from 36 weeks**



Remember – It is important to try and get **these vaccines** when you are pregnant. If you can't, make sure you get them after your delivery. These vaccines are safe even if you are breastfeeding.





Flu vaccine

Getting the flu when you are pregnant can make you much sicker than other people. It is important to get the flu shot as early as possible during flu season to help protect yourself and your unborn baby.

Covid-19

Pregnant or breastfeeding people may choose to be vaccinated against COVID-19. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends that the COVID-19 vaccine should not be withheld from pregnant or breastfeeding individuals.

Tdap

It is important to get the Tdap vaccine when you are pregnant. Tdap is one vaccine that protects against three diseases: tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Mayo Clinic suggest that pregnant people get this vaccine between 27 through 36 weeks of pregnancy, even if they have gotten the vaccine in the past.

Know about your risk factors

There are many known risk factors for preterm delivery.

Risk Factors	What Should I do?
Previous preterm delivery	Talk to your doctor about medicines like 17P or other ways to help prevent another preterm infant.
Pregnant with multiples	Carrying more than one baby means you will need to get extra rest and see your doctor more often.
Certain infections	Make sure you get tested and treated for all of your infections and tell the doctor about any symptoms you may be having.
Substance use	Avoid smoking, drinking alcohol and using illegal drugs during pregnancy.
Short time period between pregnancies	Wait at least 18 months before getting pregnant after your last delivery.
Stress	Serious types of stress caused by things like divorce, a death in the family, losing a job, financial problems, or a lack of social support can lead to preterm delivery. Reach out for help if you are experiencing high levels of stress.



*We know that approximately **eight percent** of all pregnancies involve complications that, if left untreated, may harm the mother or the baby?*

Changes During Pregnancy

During pregnancy, your body goes through many changes. These changes are a natural part of pregnancy. Understanding these changes can help you through them. Some of the changes are emotional, some are physical, and some are changes to your routine.



Trimesters	Symptom/Description	What can I do?
<p>First trimester (1-12 weeks) This is a period of fast growth and development for the baby. The baby has developed all of his or her body parts and organs.</p>	<p>Feeling tired: Most people feel very tired during the first three months of pregnancy. The tired feeling usually goes away by 13 weeks.</p> <p>Morning sickness: Feeling sick to your stomach. Some may vomit or throw up. It can happen any time of the day – not just in the morning. It usually begins in the first month of pregnancy. In most cases, it gradually goes away by the end of the 13th week and it is almost always gone by week 20.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a nap or take a few rest periods each day. • Ask family or friends to help you with housework or tasks. • Avoid having an empty stomach by eating frequent, small snacks like crackers, toast, pasta, or broth. • Ginger capsules and vitamin B6 can help. • Avoid spicy, fried, and greasy foods. • There are prescription drugs that can help.
<p>Second trimester (13-27 weeks) The baby continues to grow and develop quickly. By the 22nd week you should be able to feel the baby moving.</p>	<p>Headaches: Your body experiences a surge of hormones and an increase in blood volume. This can cause more frequent headaches. They should decrease by the middle of the 2nd trimester when your hormones stabilize.</p> <p>Heartburn: Many people have heartburn while pregnant. Your hormone changes during pregnancy can change your whole digestive system. Also, your growing womb pushes on your stomach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to your doctor about any medicines you may be able to take. • Ask your doctor about antacids. • Eat 5 or 6 small meals throughout the day. • Wait an hour or two after you eat before lying down. • When lying down, prop up your head and back with pillows. • Avoid caffeine in teas, coffees, and colas. • Avoid high fat foods, spicy foods, and chocolate.
<p>Third trimester (28-birth or 40 weeks) The baby continues to gain weight and develop important organs like the lungs and increase brain size.</p>	<p>Back pain: You may find you have to lean back to keep your balance as your belly grows. This puts more stress on your back muscles, causing back pain.</p> <p>Swelling: Your ankles, feet, and hands may become swollen in the last few months of pregnancy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your back straight and bend with your knees when you lift things off the ground. • Wear low-heeled shoes with good support. • Wear a support belt to lift your belly. • Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water a day. • Put your feet up and rest as often as you can. Do this a few times each day.

Things to Avoid During Pregnancy

As your baby grows, steer clear of things that could harm your baby. Preterm birth, low birth weight, birth defects, miscarriages and stillbirths can all be caused by the things on this list.



Substance	What it does to your body and your baby
Alcohol	It can cause serious mental and physical defects in your baby. There is no safe amount of beer, wine or booze during pregnancy. ³
Street drugs	They can cause birth defects and problems with your placenta. Infections such as hepatitis C and HIV can also be passed on to your baby. ⁴
Smoking and second-hand smoke	Smoke can cause very serious health problems for your unborn child. It is also associated with SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). If you want to stop smoking, ask your doctor or us for help. If you can't quit, cut back as much as possible. ⁵
Stress	A little stress is OK, but too much stress has been associated with preterm and low birth weight births. Reach out for help if you are under a lot of stress. ⁶
Prescription Opioids	These are strong drugs used for pain, like codeine and oxycodone. One problem with using these drugs during pregnancy is neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). Babies with NAS have drug withdrawal after birth. Breathing, feeding problems, and seizures can occur. Try not to take these drugs during pregnancy. If needed, take them exactly as prescribed. If you have been taking opioids for a long time, talk to your doctor. Do not stop them suddenly. Treatment such as methadone or buprenorphine can help you quit opioids safely. ⁷
Certain foods and drinks	<p>Raw meat or eggs, deli meat, raw or smoked fish, unpasteurized milk and soft cheeses can carry germs that will cause infections in your baby. Deli meats and smoked fish are OK to eat if they are heated.</p> <p>Fish with large amounts of mercury such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish should be avoided during pregnancy. Babies exposed to mercury can have brain damage, hearing, and vision problems. Limit canned tuna to two cans per week.</p> <p>Too much caffeine during pregnancy may be associated with preterm birth, low birth weight, and miscarriage.⁸</p> <p>For more information about caffeine use during pregnancy, go to www.marchofdimess.org.</p>



Preparing for Labor & Delivery

Once you get closer to your delivery date, your body will start preparing for your baby's arrival.

False labor

Before true labor begins, you may feel your womb tighten up. This squeezing is called Braxton Hicks, also known as practice contractions or false labor pains. Your contractions are probably just practice contractions if they:

- Are not painful.
- Do not have a regular rhythm.
- Are more than 10 minutes apart.
- Go away after drinking two glasses of water or after a short walk. Practice contractions are OK late in pregnancy.

Signs of true labor

There are several signs that you are in true labor. Call your doctor immediately when you notice these signs:

Water breaks

This means that the bag of water around your baby has broken. You may feel fluid coming from your vagina. If you think your water has broken, don't use a tampon, get in the tub, or have intercourse. Call your doctor.

True contractions

Unlike practice contractions, true contractions will get stronger and more frequent over time. You will feel your entire womb squeezing. Some women say they feel like a belt is getting tighter and tighter around them. If your contractions are less than 10 minutes apart, this may mean that true labor has begun.

Back labor

You may feel pain in your lower back that is associated with the womb contracting (squeezing). This is labor occurring in your back. This pain may spread to your lower belly and could even spread to your legs.



What should I do if I think I'm in labor?

Call the doctor and prepare to go to the hospital.



Gearing Up for Baby

If you haven't already started getting supplies for your baby-to-be, now's the time to start! Use this checklist to help you find the things you need. Ask friends and family members for help getting these items.

To wear:

- Booties or socks
- Hats
- Onesies
- Sweaters
- Stretch suits with feet
- Sleepwear, one-piece pajamas, or nightgowns

For bathing:

- Baby bathtub
- Baby lotion for after the bath
- Baby shampoo
- Baby washcloths
- Hooded bath towels
- Liquid baby soap

For sleeping:

- Bassinet or cradle
- Crib and mattress
- Tight fitting crib sheets
- Small, light receiving blankets
- Waterproof pads

For eating:

- Bibs
- Bottles and nipples for breast milk or formula
- Bottle and nipple brushes
- Burp cloths or cloth diapers for spit-ups

For breastfeeding:

- Breast pump (your health plan provides one for no cost)
- Lanolin cream to soothe sore nipples (you might be able to get this at no cost with a prescription from your doctor)
- Nursing pads to wear in your bra (you might be able to get this at no cost with a prescription from your doctor)

For changing diapers:

- Diapers
- Diaper pail
- Baby wet wipes
- Diaper rash cream
- Changing pad and table
- Diaper bag and changing pad to go in your diaper bag

For laundry:

- Fragrance-free soap. These are much less likely to bother your baby's skin

For healthcare:

- Cool mist humidifier to ease baby's breathing when the air is dry
- Medicine dropper to measure medicine
- Nasal suction bulb
- Thermometer

For travel:

- Blankets to cover your baby while you are outside
- Front pack or backpack to carry your baby in for the first six months
- Infant car seat
- Stroller

Other useful supplies:

- Playpen
- Rocking chair
- Safe toys
- Safe baby swing (avoid the kind that hangs from a doorway)
- Pacifiers, if you decide to use them





Postpartum and Newborn Care⁹

Your body after delivery

It is important to see your doctor about 4–6 weeks¹⁰ after giving birth. This visit is called a postpartum visit and is important to make sure your body is healing after delivery.

Symptom	What you can expect and what you can do	When to call the doctor
Feeling tired	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to nap, eat, and shower when your baby is napping. • Eat a healthy diet and drink plenty of fluids. • Keep taking your prenatal vitamins. • Ask family and friends for help. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are so tired that you can't take care of yourself or your baby. • You have a temperature higher than 101.⁴
Cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is expected for seven days or longer. It may get more intense while nursing. • You can take a mild pain reliever like Ibuprofen or Naproxen 	Severe cramping that is not resolved with pain medication.
Sore and swollen breasts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear a firm bra that supports your breasts 24 hours a day. • If you are not breastfeeding, use cold packs for 1-5 days until your milk stops coming in. 	You have a sore, red, painful breast with chills, fever, and flu-like symptoms. You may have an infection called mastitis.
Sore bottom, painful piles (hemorrhoids)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a cold pack for the first 48 hours. • Take a sitz bath (soaking your bottom in a small plastic tub with warm water). • Use cotton balls or pads soaked in witch hazel.* • Use a spray bottle to wash your bottom several times a day. • Use over-the-counter ointments and creams like hydrocortisone.* 	You are having severe pain or are having a lot of trouble peeing or having a bowel movement.
Bleeding and discharge from your vagina	This is normal for the first few weeks after delivery.	You pass blood clots larger than a golf ball or have severe vaginal bleeding that gets heavier.
Soreness, numbness, or itching around your cesarean incision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is expected and should improve with time. • You can use over-the-counter pain relievers or pain relievers prescribed by your doctor. • Hold your incision when you sneeze or cough. • Use pillows for extra support while feeding your baby. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your incision looks very red, is getting more painful, or is draining. This could be a sign of infection. • You have a fever.

* You may be able to get these items at no cost with a prescription from your doctor.



Heading home

You are likely to go home 1–2 days after vaginal delivery or 2–4 days following a C-section.

Breastfeeding¹¹

Almost all mothers can breastfeed. Do not worry if your breasts are small or if you are thin. All shapes and sizes can make the milk your baby needs.

Breastfeeding for the first time

If possible, nurse your baby for the first time with skin-to-skin contact within one to two hours after you give birth. This contact has many positive effects for your baby:

- Helps maintain regulated body temperature after birth.
- Helps maintain heart rate, respiratory rate, and blood pressure after birth.
- Your baby is more likely to latch on faster during breastfeeding.
- Your baby is more likely to breastfeed exclusively and for a longer time.

How often do you feed your baby?

Babies typically feed 8–12 times per day and average 1.5–3 oz per feeding for the first week or two. Feed your baby any time he or she seems hungry. Babies may smack their lips, stick out their tongue, move their head side to side, or put their hands in their mouth as a sign that they are getting hungry. If you wait until they are crying, it is often harder to calm them down for the feeding.

Breast milk is great for your baby

Doctors and health organizations agree that breastfeeding is best. You may already know that breast milk is packed with the perfect mix of nutrients your baby needs. Breast milk has special ingredients, like antibodies, that only you can provide.

Using formula

Sometimes, it does not work out to breastfeed. This can happen for many different reasons. If this is the case, formula feeding is another great option. Remember, however your baby gets the nutrition they need, is great!

Breast feeding is good for you too!

- Breastfeeding can help you recover from childbirth.
- Breastfeeding helps create a special bond between parent and baby.
- It protects your health. It can also lower your chance of getting breast cancer, ovarian cancer, and diabetes.
- Breastfeeding can help you get back to your pre-pregnancy weight.



Bodies burn almost 20 calories to make an ounce of breast milk. In a day, you can burn anywhere between 380 to 600 calories!



What is skin-to-skin contact?

You should continue skin-to-skin contact for the first few weeks at home. Here are some tips for performing skin-to-skin contact:

- Wash your hands well before starting.
- Have your baby wear only a diaper.
- Sit in a location where you can lean back a bit. Half lying, half sitting is good for your baby's breathing.
- Put your baby against your bare chest. Baby should be facing you, tummy to tummy.
- Enjoy this time with your baby for at least an hour.





Your first few weeks at home

Many people who go home with a baby for the first time can feel overwhelmed. It may be scary thinking about everything you need to do and know about having a new baby. Here are some great tips to help ease your worries about caring for your baby.

Your baby should see the doctor

It is very important to take your baby to see their doctor 3–5 days after birth and again before turning one month. It often helps to make your baby's doctor appointment before you leave the hospital.

If your newborn looks sick, has a fever, is feeding poorly, is sleeping too much, vomiting or changes color, call your doctor right away.

Make sure your baby is safe when sleeping

You should always put your baby on his or her back to sleep (unless the doctor tells you not to) in a crib or bassinet. You and your baby should never sleep in the same bed. However, keep baby's sleep area in the same room where you sleep for the first six months to a year, if possible. Never place your baby on sofas or soft surfaces. Do not keep loose bedding, bumper pads or toys in your baby's sleep area.

Give your baby a bath

Babies should only receive sponge baths until their umbilical cord has fallen off. Never leave your infant unattended in the bath.



Additional sources:

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