



2000 Medical Parkway, Ste. 304
Annapolis, MD 21401

Frequently Asked Questions in Pregnancy

1. When should I start prenatal vitamins?

- You can start your vitamins as soon as you are trying to conceive. Over-the-counter multivitamins are fine, as long as they contain 400-800mcg of folic acid. Too much of any vitamin can be harmful, and is not recommended over the daily requirement. If they tend to make you sick, then try taking them with a meal or with a snack at bedtime.

2. What foods should I avoid in pregnancy?

- Meats should be fully cooked, including lunch meats and hotdogs, to prevent listeria infection. While fish is very healthy for you, most sushi is raw and should be avoided.
- Certain fish are high in mercury and should also be avoided, such as: shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish.
- Avoid unpasteurized foods; however, soft cheeses which are pasteurized, are fine.

3. Can I eat shellfish and tuna?

- Yes, in moderation. Canned light tuna is fine, but avoid albacore and chunk white tuna. You should check any local advisories regarding shellfish. Salmon, shrimp, cod, tilapia and catfish are considered low in mercury, and are healthy for you.

4. Can I continue exercising?

- Yes, exercise is good for you during pregnancy. You can continue with whatever exercises you have been doing, other than high impact or heavy lifting more than 25 lbs. Do not exercise to the point of exhaustion, and your heart rate should stay below 140-150 bpm.
- If you haven't started exercise, then begin with walking 10 minutes a day, and increase gradually to 30 minutes – 5 times per week. Exercise can help prevent pregnancy induced diabetes and high blood pressure.
- After 14 weeks, we recommend avoiding activities that can be harmful, such as skiing, karate, contact sports, tubing, horseback riding, and any activities that increase your risk of falling.
- Prenatal yoga can be a good way to stay fit and provide relaxation, and may also help prepare for childbirth. Be sure to discuss this with your provider and instructor.

5. What can I take for the following?

- **Nausea** – saltines in the morning are helpful before you try a meal. Keep yourself well hydrated. At least 64 oz. of water daily is recommended. Try to eat small frequent meals, rather than 3 large meals. Don't let your stomach get too full, but don't let yourself get too hungry. Avoid greasy and spicy foods. Ginger ale can be helpful, as well as ginger capsules. If you are having difficulty keeping food and fluids down, please contact our office for further instructions.
- **Cold and congestion** – plain saline spray only is helpful to keep sinuses clear, and can be used a few times a day. Tylenol products, antihistamines, and decongestants on our medication list can be used in moderation. If your symptoms persist, please contact your primary care provider.
- **Heartburn and indigestion** – Tums, Mylanta, Maalox, and Rolaids can be helpful; Zantac 75-150mg once or twice a day, and Pepcid AC over-the-counter, as per package instructions. Eat small meals, and avoid spicy and/or fried foods.
- **Cough and sore throat** – plain Robitussin or Robitussin DM, Sucrets and Tylenol are safe to use.
- **Constipation** – increase water, fluids and fiber, daily. Metamucil, Benefiber, and Colace can be taken, and are considered stool softeners, not laxatives. If this doesn't help, you can try small doses of Senekot or Milk of Magnesia.
- **Diarrhea** – don't push foods until liquids are tolerated, then you can try a bland diet and avoid spicy and/or fried foods. If necessary, you can try Kaopectate or Imodium AD; however, if it is persistent, please contact our office.
- **Hemorrhoids** – Preparation H, Tucks Pads, Anusol HC 1% can be used. If it is severe, call the office.

6. When do I call my Primary Care Provider?

- Call your primary care provider for any issues unrelated to your pregnancy, as well as cold and flu symptoms that persist more than a week, sinus infections, and fever over 100.5 degrees.

7. Are antibiotics ok to take in pregnancy?

- Antibiotics are frequently prescribed during pregnancy. These medications must be chosen carefully. Some antibiotics are ok, while others are not, and depend on how far along you are in your pregnancy.
- Antibiotics that are generally safe are as follows: Amoxicillin, Ampicillin, Erythromycin, Penicillin and Clindamycin.
- Certain antibiotics should be avoided, for example: Tetracyclines, which include Doxycycline and Minocycline, which can be harmful.

8. Can I get a flu shot?

- Yes, getting a flu shot is safe and recommended any time during your pregnancy. It is proven that the vaccine passes through the placenta and can help to prevent flu infection in your newborn. The nasal spray flu vaccine is NOT recommended in pregnancy.
- It is also ok to take antiviral medication. If you have questions about these, please call us.

9. What about caffeine, herbal black tea and sweeteners?

- Coffee, tea, cola and other caffeine drinks are now allowed in pregnancy, equivalents, or 200 mg/day – that is two 8 oz. cups of coffee.
- Nutrasweet and Splenda can be used in moderation, but not more than twice daily.
- National brand herbal teas are likely safe in pregnancy

10. Can I use a hot tub?

- It is not considered safe to use a hot tub at any time during your pregnancy. Spending 10 minutes or more can raise your body temperature to 102 degrees, and can be harmful. A bath in which the water cools, and is not re-heated, is considered safe.

11. Can I color my hair?

- Yes, but you may want to avoid this in your first trimester.

12. Can I paint the baby's room?

- Yes, as long as it is well ventilated and with water-based paint. Oil-based paints and paint thinners and strippers should be avoided. Low VOC (volatile organic compounds) paints are preferred.

13. Can I travel by plane? Can I travel long distances in the car?

- The ideal time to travel during pregnancy is between 14 – 28 weeks. If things are progressing well, and you have had a recent routine appointment, you may be able to travel up to 36 weeks, providing there is a hospital near- by that can provide the appropriate care if a problem should arise.
- If it is a long trip, be sure to walk up and down the aisle of the plane a few times, or get out of the car to stretch and move around every hour. Stay well hydrated and avoid salty foods, as swelling of legs and feet can be more common.
- Check with the airline you are traveling with, as they may have different restrictions.
- Remember to get a copy of your prenatal record to take with you on long trips.

14. Can I change the cat litter?

- We recommend that someone else in your household change the litter box. If you live alone, it is recommended you wear plastic gloves.

15. Can I get a spray tan or use sunless tanning lotion

- No, these are not recommended, but you can use regular suntan lotion. You should apply SPF 30 tanning lotion in the sun more frequently, as it is easier to get sunburned while pregnant.

16. Can I go to the dentist and what about dental x-rays?

- Yes, it is safe to go to the dentist. If you need x-rays, be sure to inform your dentist that you are pregnant, and that you must be shielded with a heavy lead apron.

17. Is it safe to have intercourse?

- Yes, it is not harmful to you or the baby to have sex during your pregnancy, but it may become more uncomfortable in the last trimester. If you think your water might have broken, check with your provider. If you have been advised by us to be on pelvic rest, then do not have intercourse.
- You may have some spotting after sex which should be light and stop within 1-2 days. If it continues, please call us.

18. When should I be concerned about vaginal spotting and cramping?

- Light spotting and mild cramping can be perfectly normal in the first several weeks of pregnancy. Staying well-hydrated can be very helpful with cramping and spotting, and we recommend 8-10 glasses of water every day. If bleeding is a bright red flow, not just when you wipe, then you should contact us immediately.
- It is also normal to have some red spotting after an internal exam at your prenatal appointments.
- Spotting is common after straining with bowel movements, frequent coughing and after sexual intercourse.

19. What can I do for feet and ankle swelling?

- It is common for women to retain fluid in pregnancy. Make sure you are drinking enough water! Again, 8-10 glasses of water daily are recommended. Avoid salt and foods high in sodium, including chips, lunchmeats, cheeses, fast foods and frozen meals.
- If you sit at work, to improve circulation, get up and walk around for 5 minutes, several times a day.
- Keep your feet elevated when possible, and sleep on your left side at night.

20. What can I do for leg cramps?

- Increase your calcium intake by drinking more milk and increasing your intake of dairy products. Also, try increasing your potassium intake with Gatorade or bananas, and avoid carbonated drinks.

21. The baby hasn't moved as much today. Should I be concerned?

- Usually, you won't feel the baby start to move until approximately 20 weeks, and you won't feel regular movement until 26 weeks. At that time, you should feel the baby move several times a day. If you have noticed significantly decreased fetal movement after 26 weeks, we suggest you drink something sweet and cold; lie on your left side in a quiet place, with your hand on your belly. Count the movements over the next 30-60 minutes. Every movement counts, it doesn't have to be a "kick". You should feel 8-10 movements in an hour, and will probably feel them sooner than that. Once you hit 10 you can stop. If it is less than 10 in an hour, or if you are concerned, please call the office.

22. What should I do if I pass my mucous plug?

- If you pass your mucous plug before 36 weeks, please call the office. It is not uncommon to pass the mucous plug after 36 weeks. It might be several weeks before you start labor, and there is no need to call the office. You may lose pieces of this at a time, or it may pass all at once.

23. How will I know if my water breaks?

- You will have a frequent or continuous leakage of water, or it could be a gush. It can be a large or small amount. Sometimes it is hard to tell if you are leaking water through your vagina, or if it is very clear urine that is uncontrolled. Sometimes the baby may be positioned on your bladder and can cause you to have incontinence. Please contact us if you feel you need to be evaluated.

24. Labor precautions will be discussed with your provider.

- Please contact us if you are concerned about preterm labor and are experiencing more than 4-6 contractions an hour prior to 37 weeks.

Post-Partum Frequently Asked Questions

1. How soon after delivery can I...

- **Shower or take a bath** – Showering before you leave the hospital is recommended, and can be done daily with any delivery. Be sure to keep any sutures or steri-strips at your incision site clean and dry. Do not take a bath for at least 4-6 weeks after a c-section delivery, or until you have been evaluated by your provider at the office, and you have discussed this matter.
- **Drive** – We do not recommend driving after delivery until you feel safe and can handle an emergency. For vaginal deliveries, it could be 1 week, and not sooner than 2 weeks after a c-section delivery.
- **Have intercourse** – This is not recommended until you have your post-partum check-up.

- **Exercise** – This depends on what type of delivery you have had, and if you have been exercising during your pregnancy. Strenuous exercise is not recommended until after your post-partum appointment, but walking and minimal exercise can be ok, sooner. It is best to call to be sure.

2. How long will I continue to bleed after delivery?

- Bleeding can continue for up to 6 weeks after delivery, and it can stop and restart during this time. It can be heavy the first few days with some clots, and continue light to moderate after that. You may actually have a menstrual cycle after this time.

3. When should I be concerned that I may have more than just the “baby blues”?

- Having some crying spells after the baby is born can be considered normal. Your hormones will be changing rapidly and this can cause you to feel more emotional for a few weeks. If you are experiencing extreme sadness or feelings of being out of control, please call the office. In general, 85% of women will have the “baby blues”, or transient mood changes for 2 weeks. If you are concerned, please contact us.