

# Special Beginnings<sup>®</sup>

## Get a healthy start to pregnancy



As you begin your journey to parenthood, nothing is more important than getting regular prenatal care. Special Beginnings offers extra support and information to help you make the most of these nine life-changing months. You'll learn what to expect during your pregnancy, how to take care of yourself and baby, plus where to go when you need to know more.

## Check up on your baby's health!

To ensure the health of you and your baby, your doctor or midwife will want to see you regularly throughout your pregnancy. It's important to keep each appointment because there are routine tests that can be performed only at certain times during your pregnancy. At most prenatal visits they will check your weight, blood pressure, urine, baby's growth (by measuring your abdomen), and baby's heartbeat. After your initial visit, which may include a Pap smear, your doctor or midwife will usually not check your cervix again until the final month of pregnancy, unless you begin having a lot of contractions. Check-ups will usually be scheduled monthly until the end of your second trimester. After that, you'll be going more often—usually twice a month—and then weekly in the last month.

## Diet and fitness

### Keep your food safe

Raw meat harbors bacteria. So wash your hands well after handling raw meat and be sure to thoroughly cook all meat before eating it. Do not eat raw fish (including sushi). Limit tuna intake to three servings a week, as it may contain high mercury levels. Check cheese labeling to be sure it has undergone the pasteurization process that kills most bacteria.

### Eat and drink for your health—and your baby's

If you are having difficulty with morning sickness, here are some tips that may help:

- ▶ **Eat smaller meals** more frequently during the day.
- ▶ **Try ginger or vitamin B6** with the approval of your doctor or midwife.
- ▶ **Try eating a few saltine crackers** in the morning before getting out of bed.
- ▶ **Try to identify what causes the nausea** and avoid the trigger if possible.

To prevent dehydration, be sure to drink at least eight tall glasses of water every day. If you are nauseated, drinking small amounts at a time may be better than a large glass all at once.

*It's important that you eat healthful, nutritious foods. Your baby's developing body and organs use the nutrients you consume as building blocks.*

### Prenatal vitamins give you a healthy boost

Prenatal vitamins give you the extra nutrients that you need. But if they seem to cause morning sickness, talk with your doctor or midwife. Some women find it better to take them in the evening. If you still have trouble, you may need to stop taking them for a while. If that is the case, your doctor or midwife may give you a folic acid supplement to help protect your baby from spinal defects. After you start feeling better, you should be able to start taking the prenats again.

### What's the proper weight gain?

Your total weight gain during pregnancy will depend upon where you started. Regardless, pregnancy is not the time to diet. You and your doctor or midwife may discuss specifically what you should expect. Some of the Special Beginnings book choices outline how much weight is typically gained each week and where it is all going.

### You can be active!

While you may need to limit or change your physical fitness routine, it is important to stay active. Be sure to check with your doctor or midwife before beginning any new exercise regimen and also discuss your current exercise routine to determine which activities are acceptable during pregnancy. Any time an activity brings on contractions STOP, drink a glass of water and lie down. They'll usually go away. If they don't, call your doctor or midwife right away.



### FIND HELPFUL PREGNANCY INFORMATION AT [regence.com](http://regence.com)

As a Regence member, you have access to a complete source of health and wellness information at [regence.com](http://regence.com). You can search for a provider, check claims, research cost and care options and access many resources of particular interest to you, including:

- ▶ **Health news on pregnancy and parenting**
- ▶ **Community message boards**

Just sign in at [regence.com](http://regence.com), click on *Wellness Tools* at the bottom of your member dashboard, and then choose *Health Library* under the *Health* tab. Type "pregnancy" into the search box for helpful pregnancy-related information.



## Safety

### Review your medications

Make sure you tell your doctor or midwife about any medications or supplements you may be taking, including:

- ▶ **Over-the-counter medications**
- ▶ **Medications prescribed by other physicians**
- ▶ **Homeopathic and naturopathic medications and supplements** (including some types of teas)

Discuss what's safe and what's not with your doctor or midwife right away.

### Is there a cat in your home or yard?

You need to take extra precautions if you have a cat—or even if neighborhood cats visit your yard. Cat feces contains microscopic parasites that can be harmful to your baby. Here's what you can do to stay safe:

- ▶ **Have someone else clean the litter box.**
- ▶ **Wear gloves if you must change cat litter.**
- ▶ **Change cat litter daily.**
- ▶ **Avoid sick cats.**
- ▶ **Wear gloves while gardening.**

### Always wear your seatbelt

Use a seatbelt in the car throughout your pregnancy—up to and including your trip to the hospital! As your baby gets larger, wear the lap belt under your belly and the shoulder harness above it rather than across it. Studies indicate that it is more dangerous for you to travel in a car without a seat belt than with one during pregnancy.

## Special pregnancy concerns

### It's normal to feel lightheaded

Many women feel dizzy or faint during pregnancy. It's normal. Although most common during your first trimester, you may notice it throughout your pregnancy. Why? Rising hormones cause your blood vessels to relax and widen. This increases blood flow to your baby and slows the return of the blood to you. This can cause your blood pressure to be lower than usual, which can reduce the blood flow to your brain and make you dizzy. You should contact your doctor or midwife immediately if you have persistent dizziness or experience additional symptoms such as blurred vision, palpitations or headaches.

### Having problems with irregularity?

You're not alone. Many pregnant women experience constipation. Increased pressure on your rectum and changes in hormones often slow the movement of your gastrointestinal tract. Iron supplements may also be a factor. To ease or prevent constipation, try the following:

- ▶ **Drink plenty of water.**
- ▶ **Get moving.** Moderate exercise can help your body eliminate waste more effectively. (Always consult your doctor or midwife before starting an exercise routine.)

- ▶ **Over-the-counter fiber supplements** (such as Fibercon and Metamucil) are often helpful if taken with plenty of water. Check with your doctor or midwife first.

- ▶ **Eat high fiber foods daily**, such as whole-grain breads, cereals, and fresh fruits and vegetables.

### Don't forget your teeth!

Pregnancy—and the changing hormone levels that go with it—can aggravate some dental problems. So, taking good care of your mouth is important for you and your baby. Some research suggests that serious gum disease, called periodontal disease, is linked to premature birth and low birth weight. Periodontal disease is also linked to other diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Infections in the mouth can lead to preterm labor and birth. Brush thoroughly two times daily, floss daily, eat a balanced diet with snacking in moderation, schedule regular dental check-ups and notify your dentist of any changes in your mouth such as swelling, redness or bleeding.

Through a partnership with Epic Dental, Regence members receive 25% off dental care products containing xylitol, a natural sweetener that has been clinically proven to reduce cavities by up to 80%. Epic's xylitol products are available in gum, mints, toothpaste and mouthwash. To receive your 25% discount through Epic Dental, go to [www.epicdental.com/t-Regence.aspx](http://www.epicdental.com/t-Regence.aspx). Simply use your Regence member number and promotion code: RG25FT.

### HELPFUL TIP

#### ASK QUESTIONS!

*Keep a log of the questions you have between appointments so that you can remember to ask them when you talk with your doctor or midwife. You can always call your program nurse to ask questions as well.*



Our Special Beginnings staff is dedicated to the health of you and your baby. Please call us with any pregnancy questions you may have: 1-888-JOY-BABY (1-888-569-2229)