

Pregnancy

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How often will I be seen?

During the first 6 months, you will come about once a month. Starting at 28 weeks (around 7 months), you'll come every two weeks. During the last month of your pregnancy, you will be seen every week until you deliver. This is the typical schedule for an uncomplicated pregnancy; if you are having any complications you will be seen as often as is necessary.

During each visit, we will check your urine, weight, and blood pressure. We will measure how much your uterus is growing and listen to the heart tones of the baby.

Why do I have my blood drawn?

We will do several important tests on your blood to know your blood type and if you have been exposed to various diseases like rubella, hepatitis, syphilis, and the chicken pox. We will also check your thyroid level.

Later in your pregnancy, we will ask to check your blood for diabetes in pregnancy. This consists of three blood draws — one before and two after drinking a sugar solution (the drink tastes like orange soda). If your blood is elevated after the test, we will inform you that you will need a more detailed test in order to truly diagnose diabetes. You will need to be fasting for this test.

Why should I take the AFP test?

The California Prenatal Screening Program can help detect some birth defects, such as Down syndrome, neural tube defects, trisomy 18, and Smith-Lemli-Opitz syndrome. Although this test is voluntary, the state mandates that we offer this option: Please inform your provider if you consent or decline to test. The testing includes a blood test and an ultrasound in the first trimester followed by a blood test in the second trimester.

Will I have an ultrasound?

We will schedule an ultrasound for you between 18 and 20 weeks to look for abnormalities in your pregnancy. If you wish to know the gender of your baby, you may ask at that time. Remember, there is no guarantee that we can confirm definitively your baby's gender. If we are unable to tell the sex of the baby, you can arrange to return for a second ultrasound to try again for a small fee.

How can I determine the sex of my baby?

You can determine the sex of your baby in pregnancy either at the time of the ultrasound at 18-20 weeks or by performing the Non-Invasive Pregnancy Test (NIPT). This test can be performed at any time after 10 weeks. Refer to the download form on AFP test and NIPT information in the Resources section of our website for more information.

What can I do for morning sickness?

Most women suffer from nausea during pregnancy. It is a result of how your hormones change during pregnancy; so, in a way, it marks a normal and healthy pregnancy. "Morning sickness," however, is not the best name, as it can last all day or even worsen at night. For the most part, nausea will not threaten your health or that of your baby's. Not all women suffer from nausea, and each pregnancy is different in terms of its severity. Nausea usually lasts through the first trimester and, for most women, is resolved by 16 weeks. Others may suffer their whole pregnancy. Listed below are some tips for lessening the effects of nausea.

- Eat around 5-6 times a day, but only eat a small portion at a time.
- Try not to get too hungry between meals, and do not overeat.
- Eat high-carbohydrate, low-fat foods like bananas, bread, rice, and pasta.
- Avoid spicy or greasy foods.
- Avoid acidic foods like orange juice or apples.
- Add protein to each meal and snack.
- Lemonade may help reduce the extra saliva that is common with nausea in pregnancy.
- Drink liquids between meals instead of during meals.
- Keep crackers at your bedside and eat them before getting out of bed in the morning.
- Stick to foods and beverages that are either cold or hot, not room temperature. Frozen fruit popsicles are great to have on hand.
- Apply pressure to your wrists with sea bands, a form of acupuncture. You can purchase them at the drugstore. While inexpensive and drug-free, there is no guarantee that they will work.
- Acupuncture may also help and is safe during pregnancy.
- Avoid activities that make your nausea worse. If cooking makes you ill, for example, ask family members to help cook dinner.
- Go outside for fresh air.
- Rise slowly from lying down or sitting.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Herbal treatments with mint, ginger, or orange may help and are safe.

If you are still struggling, talk to your provider about stronger anti-nausea medications.

What medicines can I take?

Our preference is to avoid all medicines in pregnancy, if possible. Please discuss with us any medicines you have been on or would like to take. We will let you know if they are safe for your baby. Please also ask us before taking any herbal medicines or tea; as these have medicinal properties, they may not be safe during pregnancy.

- For headaches, backaches, sore muscles, or fevers, take Tylenol.
- For allergies, colds, or coughs, take Robitussin, Sudafed, Claritin, and Zyrtec. You may take Benadryl for bedtime use, only.
- For heartburn, take Tums, Maalox, or Mylanta.
- For yeast infections, take Monistat; over the counter medicine is fine as well.
- For constipation, take Colace, Milk of Magnesia, Metamucil, or Miralax.
- Please avoid aspirin or nonsteroidals like Motrin or Advil; also, avoid products with alcohol.

Can I have a flu vaccination?

Yes. You should get the flu shot, not the nasal spray vaccine. You may get the vaccine in the second and third trimesters.

Getting vaccinated can help protect you and your baby after birth since you will pass antibodies onto your baby during pregnancy. Pregnant women are more likely to become severely ill because of the flu than women who are of reproductive age who are not pregnant, according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Flu also may be harmful to a pregnant woman's developing baby. Fever, a common flu symptom, may be associated with neural tube defects and other adverse outcomes for a developing baby.

The flu shot is safe for pregnant women. The CDC has a list of recent studies on the benefits of flu vaccination for pregnant women can be found [here](#).

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) and CDC recommend that pregnant women get a flu vaccine during any trimester of their pregnancy because flu poses a danger to pregnant women and a flu vaccine can prevent serious illness, including hospitalization, in pregnant women.

Pregnant women experience the same common side effects as other people. They are generally mild and include:

- Soreness, redness, and/or swelling from the shot
- Fainting
- Headache
- Fever
- Muscle aches
- Nausea
- Fatigue

If side effects occur, they usually begin soon after the shot is given and generally last for 1-2 days. Rarely, flu shots can cause serious problems like severe allergic reactions. Anyone with a severe, life-threatening allergy to any of the vaccine ingredients should not get the shot.

Source: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Flu Vaccine Safety and Pregnancy."

https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/qa_vacpregnant.htm

What about the coronavirus?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against the virus that causes COVID-19, but there are many being developed. For now, without a vaccine, the CDC recommends getting vaccinated for both the flu and whooping cough, since both present similar symptoms to those of the novel coronavirus.

At this point, researchers do not know how the flu and the coronavirus will interact during flu season, but, to be safe, scientists from the CDC strongly encourage pregnant women and their households to vaccinate themselves against the flu.

Source: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "People at Increased Risk for COVID-19: If You Are Pregnant, Breastfeeding, or Caring for Newborns."

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>

Can I exercise during my pregnancy?

Yes, you can continue to exercise the way you exercised before you became pregnant if you are healthy and your pregnancy is normal. It is also safe to start some types of exercise. Either way, it is important to discuss exercise with your obstetrician during your early prenatal visits, so together, we can decide on a safe routine that fits your needs.

Regular exercise during pregnancy benefits you and your baby by:

- Reducing back pain
- Easing constipation
- Decreasing your risk of gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, and cesarean delivery
- Promoting healthy weight gain during pregnancy
- Improving your overall general fitness and strengthens your heart and blood vessels
- Helping you to lose the baby weight after your baby is born

Source: *The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. "Exercise during Pregnancy."*

<https://www.acog.org/Patients/FAQs/Exercise-During-Pregnancy>

Can I work during my pregnancy?

Most women can continue to work while pregnant, and the Mayo Clinic has some tips. Keep bland snacks around and avoid nauseating foods and other triggers to curb nausea from morning sickness. Combat fatigue during the workday by getting enough sleep, eating protein- and iron-rich foods, drinking plenty of fluids and taking frequent breaks. Minimize workplace stress by talking to family members or co-workers, planning your day and delegating, and practicing relaxation techniques.

Certain working conditions could increase your risk of complications during pregnancy, including:

- Exposure to harmful substances
- Prolonged standing
- Heavy lifting, climbing or carrying
- Excessive noise
- Heavy vibrations, such as from large machines
- Extreme temperatures

Source: *The Mayo Clinic. "Working during pregnancy."*

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/in-depth/pregnancy/art-20047441>