

Frequently Asked Questions in Pregnancy/Postpartum

1. **When should I start prenatal vitamins?**
 - You can start your vitamins when you are trying to conceive. Over-the-counter multivitamins are fine. We recommend one with folic acid (800 mcg), iron and dha. Too much of any vitamin can be harmful. It is not recommended over the daily requirement. If they make you sick, try taking them with food at bedtime.
2. **What foods should I avoid in pregnancy?**
 - Meats should be fully cooked, including lunchmeats 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 be avoided, such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish.
 - Avoid unpasteurized foods; however, soft cheeses, which are pasteurized, are fine.
 - Thoroughly wash produce.
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 about shellfish. Salmon, shrimp, cod, tilapia and catfish are low in mercury and 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 marathon training. Use proper body mechanics when lifting. Do not exercise to the point of exhaustion. If you become faint or short of breath please stop and discuss it with your provider at your next visit, before continuing the exercise.
 - If you have not 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, scuba diving, sky diving, tubing, horseback riding, and any activities that increase your risk of falling.
 - Prenatal yoga can be a good way to stay fit, provide relaxation, and help prepare for childbirth. Avoid hot yoga.
5. **What medications can I take?**
 - Please click the link on our web site here; [Medication Usage in Pregnancy List](#).
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. **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.
8. **Can I get a Covid vaccine?**
 - Yes, pregnant women can get the Covid vaccine. If you have allergies to ingredients in the vaccine, please consult your provider before getting.
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.

- Herbal teas have not been studied to accurately know if safe in pregnancy. Please discuss with your provider.

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, 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 be 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. If you need a dental letter, please contact the office.

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.

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 80-100 ounces 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, 80-100 ounces of water daily is 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, sleep on your left side at night, and wear pregnancy compression socks/stockings.

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.

- A Magnesium supplement can help with leg cramps. We recommend 250-350 mg as needed daily during symptoms. In excess, this can cause diarrhea.

21. The baby has not moved as much today. Should I be concerned?

- Usually, you will not feel the baby start to move until approximately 20 weeks, and you will not 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 (FM) 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 FM's over the next 30-60 minutes. Every FM counts, it does not have to be a "kick". You should feel 8-10 FM's in an hour, and will probably feel them sooner. Once you hit 10, you can stop. If less than 10 per hour, or you are concerned, please call the office.

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

- 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. Put a pad on and if soaked in 15 minutes, please call the office.

24. Labor precautions will be discussed with your provider.

- Please contact us if you are concerned about preterm labor and are experiencing more than 5 contractions an hour prior to 37 weeks.

Post-Partum Frequently Asked Questions

1. How soon after delivery can I...

- **Shower, bathe, swim** – 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 or go swimming for at least 6 weeks after delivery once your provider at the office has evaluated you, and you have discussed this matter. Sitz baths are Ok.
- **Drive** – We do not recommend driving after delivery until you feel safe and can handle an emergency, such as slamming on the breaks or swerving to avoid an accident. For vaginal deliveries, it could be 1 week, and not sooner than 2 weeks after a C-section delivery. You must be off narcotic pain medication as well.
- **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.

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. Bleeding can also be heavier if you are breast-feeding as the uterus contracts.

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. Please see our Mental Health Resources list as needed on the web site, or click the link here: [Mental Health Resources](#). If you are concerned about your postpartum mental health, please call the office. If you have thoughts of harm to yourself or others please alert someone nearby and safely head to the emergency room or call 911 for an evaluation. You can also call 988 for suicide prevention help.

4. Where can I find information about breast-feeding?

- Please consult the links in the Breastfeeding section of our web site here: [Obstetrics Education Information](#).