



Prenatal and Antenatal Care

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PREGNANCY - COMMON SYMPTOMS AND CARE TIPS

ARTICLE

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Medical prenatal care such as checkups and screening tests help you and your baby stay healthy.

PRENATAL CARE AND TESTS

- Medical checkups and screening tests **help you and your baby stay healthy**. This is referred to as **prenatal care**.
- It also includes education and counseling on **how to deal with various aspects of your pregnancy**.
- Your doctor may address a variety of topics with you during your visits, including a **healthy diet and physical activity, screening tests, and what to expect during labor and delivery**.

Prenatal checkups*

- Regular checkups are critical during pregnancy. This consistent care can help you and your baby stay healthy, **recognize concerns early, and avoid complications during birth**. Routine checkups usually include the following:
 - For weeks four through 20, **do it once a month**.
 - For weeks 20 through 36, **do it twice a month**.
 - For weeks 36 to birth, **do it weekly**.
 - Women who are pregnant with a high-risk pregnancy **should see their doctors more frequently**.
- Your doctor will perform a full physical exam, take blood for lab testing, and **calculate your due date during your first visit**.
- A breast exam, a pelvic exam to examine your uterus (and), and a **cardiac exam may also be performed by your doctor**.
- During this first visit, your doctor will ask you a lot of questions about your lifestyle, relationships, and health habits at this first visit. **It's critical to be open and honest with your doctor**.
- Most prenatal appointments will cover the following items after the initial visit:
 - Checking your **blood pressure and weight**
 - Keeping an eye on the **baby's heart rate**
 - Checking the growth of your baby by **measuring your abdomen**
- Throughout your pregnancy, you will undergo some standard tests, such as **anemia tests, testing to determine your risk of gestational diabetes, and screenings to detect hazardous infections**.
- To manage your care, work with your doctor as a team. Keep all of your appointments — **they're all crucial!** To learn more about this wonderful period, ask questions and read.

Monitor your baby's activity!

- Keep track of your baby's movement **after 28 weeks**. This will help you detect if your baby is moving less than usual, **which could indicate that he or she is in discomfort and need medical attention**.
- The "count-to-10" method is a simple technique to accomplish this.
- Count your baby's movements in the evening, when the fetus is usually the most active. If you're having problems feeling your baby move, lie down. Within 20 minutes, most women can count up to 10 motions.
- When the baby is active, however, it is uncommon for a woman to count fewer than **10 movements in two hours**.
- Every day, **count your baby's movements** to see what is normal for you.
- If your baby moves less than 10 times in two hours or if you notice your baby moving less than usual, **call your doctor. Call your doctor straight away if your baby isn't moving at all.**

Prenatal tests

What tests are done early in pregnancy?

- **Several routine lab tests are done early in pregnancy**, including:
 - complete blood count (CBC)
 - blood type and Rh factor
 - urinalysis
 - urine culture

What does a complete blood count test for?

- • A CBC determines the number of different cells in your blood. The number of red blood cells in your blood can show whether you have a specific type of anemia.
- The number of white blood cells in your blood can show how many disease-fighting cells are present.
- The number of platelets in your blood can show whether you have a clotting disorder.

What is the Rh factor?

- A protein found on the surface of red blood cells is known as the **Rh factor**. You are Rh positive if this protein is found in your blood cells. **You are Rh negative if your blood cells lack this protein.**

Why is it important to know your Rh status?

- When a woman is Rh negative and her fetus is Rh positive, **her body can produce antibodies against the Rh factor**. These antibodies have the potential to harm the fetus's red blood cells. In a first pregnancy, when the body produces a small number of antibodies, this usually does not pose a problem. However, it **can cause complications in a later pregnancy**.

What is a urinalysis?

- A urinalysis is a urine test that looks for certain substances in your urine:
 - red blood cells to determine if **you have a urinary tract disease**,
 - white blood cells to determine whether **you have a urinary tract infection**,
 - glucose, because high blood sugar levels can be a **sign of diabetes mellitus**.
- This test also determines the level of protein in your blood, **which can be compared to levels later in pregnancy**. High protein levels may indicate preeclampsia, a potentially fatal complication that can occur later in pregnancy.

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1. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). (2017). *Antenatal care for pregnant women*. Retrieved from <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/practice-statement/articles/2017/05/01/antenatal-care>

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Prenatal care, Checkups and tests

- Medical prenatal care such as checkups and screening tests help you and your baby stay healthy. This is referred to as prenatal care.¹
- It also includes education and counseling on how to deal with various aspects of your pregnancy.¹
- As antenatal care, your doctor may address a variety of topics with you during your visits, including a healthy diet and physical activity, screening tests, and what to expect during labor and delivery.¹

Prenatal checkups¹

- Regular checks are critical during pregnancy. This constant care can help you and your baby stay healthy, recognize concerns early, and avoid complications during birth. Routine checkups usually include the following:
 - For weeks four through 28, do it once a month;
 - For weeks 28 through 36, do it twice a month.
 - For weeks 36 to birth, do it weekly.
- Women who are pregnant with a high-risk pregnancy should see their doctors more frequently.
- Your doctor will perform a full physical exam, take blood for lab testing, and calculate your due date during your first visit.
- A breast exam, a pelvic exam to examine your uterus (womb), and a cervical exam may also be performed by your doctor.
- During this first visit, your doctor will ask you a lot of questions about your lifestyle, relationships, and health habits at this first visit. It's critical to be open and honest with your doctor.
- Most prenatal appointments will cover the following items after the initial visit:
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- **To manage your care, work with your doctor as a team. Keep all of your appointments — they're all crucial! To learn more about this wonderful period, ask questions and read.**

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Prenatal tests

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References:

1. Women's Health. Prenatal care and tests. Page last updated: January 30, 2019. Available at: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/youre-pregnant-now-what/prenatal-care-and-tests>. Last accessed at: 29/01/2022
2. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Routine Tests During Pregnancy. Last reviewed: July 2021. Available at: <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/routine-tests-during-pregnancy>. Last accessed at: 29/01/2022