

Great Valley Ob/Gyn

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Bleeding

Bleeding may occur during pregnancy for several reasons. In the first trimester, bleeding may be the first sign of a threatened miscarriage. Unfortunately, there is usually little, if anything, that can be done to prevent miscarriage. If you have spotting or light bleeding without any pain, please rest, avoid intercourse, and observe the flow. If you have pelvic pain, call us immediately, regardless of how heavy the bleeding. If your bleeding becomes heavy (e.g. saturating a maxi pad in an hour or less time), call us immediately.

Diet and Weight Gain during Pregnancy

The recommended weight gain for women at a healthy weight before pregnancy (body mass index or BMI* of 18.5-24.9) is 25-35 pounds. Less weight gain is recommended if you are overweight (15-25 pounds for women with a BMI of 25-29, and 11-20 pounds for women with a BMI of over 30). Very obese women may even lose weight with a healthy diet. Underweight women (BMI less than 18.5) are advised to gain 28-40 pounds. Eat a well balanced diet with three meals a day and snacks as needed. Try to include:

1. at least two servings of protein - meat, fish, eggs, dried beans and nuts
2. 4 servings of vegetables
3. 3 servings of grains – bread, cereals, rice and pasta
4. no more than 3 servings of fruit
5. 2-4 servings of dairy products
6. 6-8 glasses of water

*To determine your body mass index, Google "BMI" for multiple sites that will calculate it for you.

If you do not eat dairy products, you may get the calcium you need by taking a supplement such as Tums Extra – one with each meal daily.

Consumption of caffeinated beverages in moderation (less than 200 mg) is fine, but large amounts of caffeine may cause early pregnancy loss or low birth weight babies.

Please avoid the consumption of large fish including swordfish, orange roughy, tilefish, marlin, shark, King mackerel and Ahi tuna. This will limit your exposure to mercury which is a known neurotoxin. Most shellfish is fine. For more information about specific fish and mercury levels, go to the Links page of the website, click on American Pregnancy Association and search for mercury in fish.

Nausea or vomiting may occur at any time throughout the day. Try eating small frequent meals. Avoid spicy and greasy foods and try to drink fluids separately from eating solid food. Eating crackers before getting up in the morning may be helpful. If you are unable to keep anything down for 24 hours, please call us so we may arrange for some IV fluids for you to reverse the dehydration likely to be present. There are medications that may help.

Patients who develop gestational diabetes will be referred for additional counseling with a nutritionist.

We also recommend that you take an over the counter prenatal vitamin (any brand is fine) along with a DHA supplement of at least 200mg.

Things to avoid

*Soft cheeses and deli meats which can contain listeria, a bacteria that can increase the risk of pregnancy loss

*Raw or undercooked meat and fish which may increase your risk of hepatitis as well as toxoplasmosis, an infection that can cause birth defects

* Saccharin, because animal experiments in the 1980s raised concern for the possible association of saccharin use with cancer. Multiple studies have shown no adverse health effects or increase in fetal birth defects with aspartame, which does not readily cross the placenta. Sucralose also appears to be safe based on animal studies.

*Alcohol which is the leading cause of preventable birth defects including severe learning disabilities

*Cigarette smoke which, among other things, can increase the risk of miscarriage, preterm birth and low birth weight babies

*Recreational drugs which also can cause pregnancy loss, birth defects and, depending on the drug, cause addiction and the need for your newborn to go through withdrawal

*Hot tubs and saunas which in the first half of pregnancy can increase the risk of pregnancy loss and certain skeletal abnormalities

*Cleaning the cat litter box, especially if your pet(s) catch rodents which are a source of toxoplasmosis

Exercise

Patients with uncomplicated pregnancies may generally continue their pre-pregnancy exercise regimens with some slight modifications. Runners may need to switch to fast walking as pregnancy progresses. Lower impact activities will generally be better for your lower back and joints. Walking and swimming are particularly good in pregnancy but elliptical and stair-stepping machine use is also fine. Try to limit the time you spend flat on your back. Please avoid any activities that involve a significant risk of injury, including team sports, horseback riding, skiing and scuba diving.

If you have not been exercising before pregnancy, we encourage you to start with a brisk walk for 30-60 minutes several times per week.

Medications

See Medications in Pregnancy document found on the OB Packet page of the website. ***Please put this in an easily accessible place and refer to this before calling with questions.***

Dental Work

Dental work, including routine cleaning and getting cavities filled, should be continued during pregnancy. The use of a local anesthetic such as Novocain is fine. It is prudent to avoid routine x-rays.

Hair Coloring

It is fine to get your hair highlighted. Chemicals that are applied to your scalp, however, will be absorbed and therefore are an exposure for the baby. It is not known for certain that hair coloring is safe. We recommend that if you do have it done, wait until at least 13 weeks, and have it done in a well-ventilated area.

Travel

As long as your pregnancy is uncomplicated, travel is fine. For liability issues, many airlines will not allow you to fly once you are 36 weeks. At that point in pregnancy, we recommend that you stay within about an hour of Paoli Hospital. When you do travel, stay well hydrated and walk periodically to minimize the risk of developing a blood clot in your leg(s). Due to the risks associated with the Zika virus, it is recommended that you avoid travel to any areas where you may be at risk of exposure. As Zika may be contracted via sexual contact, condom use is advised during pregnancy if your partner must travel to those areas.

Vaccines

Both flu shots and Tdap vaccines are recommended with every pregnancy. They can be given safely at any time in pregnancy. However, because the Tdap immunization is to protect the baby after delivery, that vaccine is generally given in the third trimester.

When to call us

Please call us if you have any concerns. We especially want to hear from you if you have any of the following:

vaginal bleeding or leakage of fluid (a change in your normal discharge),

constant abdominal pain,

contractions – 6 or more an hour if you are not at least 35 weeks, when you have had contractions every 5 minutes for at least an hour if you are having your first baby, and when you have had contractions every 6-8 minutes for an hour if it is not your first baby,

a decrease in what is a normal amount of movement for your baby,

symptoms of pre-eclampsia which include severe headache, nausea and vomiting, visual changes (blurry vision or seeing silvery floating spots), pain in your upper right side, sudden or extreme swelling in your face, hands and feet.