

# What A Woman Should Know

*About the Early Months of Pregnancy*

## **Breastfeeding: As Healthy For Mothers As It Is For Babies**

### **Exercise: Fit To Be A Mom**

Generally, if you regularly engaged in sports or other physical activities before pregnancy, you can continue them during pregnancy with the consent of your doctor. Exercise improves blood circulation, keeps muscles toned, improves appetite, helps with digestion and aids sleeping. It's easy to see why regular exercise is particularly important during pregnancy. Walking, swimming, water aerobics and stretching can help keep you fit.

Look for exercise videos for pregnant women at your library and local video rental stores. Just remember to consult your doctor before starting any exercise program. Then start slowly. As your baby grows, you will tire more easily and require frequent rests. Also, be sure to drink plenty of water and stretch thoroughly before and after exercising. ✂

### **Weighting For Baby**

On average, women gain between 25 and 35 pounds during the course of a normal pregnancy. It may surprise you to learn that fat only accounts for some of that weight gain.

Here's a breakdown:

Baby	6-9 pounds
Placenta	1-1.5 pounds
Amniotic fluid	2 pounds
Uterus	2-2.25 pounds
Breasts	2-4 pounds
Blood (mom's)	3.5-4 pounds
Body fluids	3 pounds
Maternal fat stores	5-9 pounds

You've probably heard that breastfeeding has been found to be healthier for babies than bottle feeding. Breastfed babies have fewer allergies, fewer upper respiratory infections and fewer ear infections. They also have fewer stomach problems and are less likely to be too fat than bottle fed babies. But did you know just how beneficial breastfeeding is for mothers?

Studies show that women who breastfeed have a lower risk of developing breast cancer. In addition, a hormone released during breastfeeding helps the uterus contract and return to its normal shape and size more quickly. Breastfeeding also speeds up the breakdown of fat in the hips and thighs. Working mothers miss fewer days at work, too, because their babies get sick less often.

For many, choosing bottle or breast is not an easy decision. Consider what method of feeding will most likely make you and your baby happy and healthy. With support from your family, friends and pediatrician, feeding your baby will soon be second nature. ✂

## **Is It Morning Sickness If It Lasts All Day?**

The early months of pregnancy may be uncomfortable. Nausea, frequent trips to the restroom, breast tenderness and tiredness are common complaints. Here are some tips for coping with early pregnancy discomforts:

- Eat frequently throughout the day. Small meals or snacks every two to three hours can help hold off that queasy feeling. Many women find that dry food like saltines, graham crackers or dry cereal help.
- Your body needs extra fluid – and if you are vomiting, it is especially important to drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration. Avoid beverages containing caffeine – cola, coffee, and tea – because they cause you to lose additional fluid. Water, fruit juice and milk are good choices.
- Some women deal with nausea by eating a salty food, like potato chips or pretzels, with a tart beverage – like lemonade or limeade. Find a combination that works for you.
- Breasts tender and swollen? As soon as you become pregnant, your body begins to prepare for breastfeeding. Breasts become swollen and tender as the breast tissue changes to be ready to make milk. Buy a larger bra as soon as you need to, wear loose clothes, and avoid soap on your nipples.

- Feeling tired and sleepy is a normal part of pregnancy.

What's the best thing to do? Put your feet up. Lie down.

Take a nap. Go to bed early! ✂

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## *Leafy Greens Can Keep You In The Pink*

What do spinach, broccoli and turnip greens have to do with a healthy mom and baby? They contain folate, one of the family of B vitamins. It is important to eat a healthy diet during pregnancy – not only do you need extra nutrients so that your baby grows strong and healthy, but your own body needs a boost to give you the energy you need and to prevent health problems later in life. Adequate folate in your diet can help prevent certain birth defects in a growing fetus, especially defects of the baby's nervous system. The need for folate does not go away when the baby is born. Recent research has shown that folate may also play a role in the prevention of heart disease in women.

Green leafy vegetables are also a good source of other important vitamins and minerals, are low in calories, and provide fiber. During pregnancy and breastfeeding, it is important to take the prenatal vitamins prescribed by your doctor. For women who are not pregnant or breastfeeding, over-the-counter multi-vitamins provide extra vitamins and minerals that are sometimes difficult to obtain in your diet. So, eating those leafy greens is not just for pregnancy – it is a habit worth keeping for a lifetime in the pink. 🌿

## *Abnormal Conditions Could Spell Danger*

If you have never been pregnant before, you may have a difficult time judging what physical changes are normal and which are warning signs of something more serious. Common complaints of pregnancy include backache, frequent urination, fatigue, swollen ankles, heartburn, inflammation of the gums and nausea. These are normal and are not usually cause for alarm. However, here are some symptoms that may indicate problems for mother and baby, if you develop any of these symptoms or any others that don't seem normal, contact your doctor immediately:

- *Bleeding from the vagina*
- *Swelling of the face and fingers*
- *Blurred vision or seeing "spots"*
- *Severe and continuous headaches*
- *Severe pain or cramping in the abdomen or back*
- *Persistent vomiting beyond your usual morning sickness or nausea*
- *Fever over 101° F*



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