

Caring for Baby: Before, During and After Pregnancy

AmeriHealth District of Columbia
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Taking care of yourself before, during and after pregnancy is important to having a full-term, healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

Before Pregnancy

If you plan to get pregnant, talk to your doctor about your current health conditions. Talk about your physical and mental health conditions. Existing mental health conditions may put you at higher risk for depression. If you take medicines, your doctor may have to

make changes. Some medicines are not good for the baby. But don't just stop taking them. That can be just as harmful. Always follow your doctor's instructions for making changes to medicines you take.

Prenatal Care

It's very important to start prenatal care during the first trimester. This is the specialized care women receive when they are pregnant. Since pregnancies can last 40 weeks, each trimester is 13 weeks. That means, before you are 13 weeks pregnant, see your doctor. Your primary care provider

(PCP) may suggest seeing a midwife or an OB/GYN for prenatal care. Here's what you can expect at your prenatal visits:



Your doctor will test you for certain health issues. Your doctor may check you for:

- Anemia (low red blood cell count)

- Hypertension (high blood pressure)
 - Preeclampsia pre-ecl emp-see-a
 - Urinary tract and other infections
- Your doctor may ask you some questions.** He or she may ask about domestic abuse, alcohol or drug use. Some questions may seem uncomfortable, but it's important to be honest to help your doctor make the right choices for you and your baby.

Your doctor will give you a chance to ask questions. Ask about breast feeding and vitamins that you will need to take. Use this time to ask any other questions you have.

Your doctor may also suggest you visit the dentist. Good dental care is important because the body changes during pregnancy. Gum disease may play a factor in your baby being born too early and too small.

It's important to keep all prenatal appointments. Use the chart below to help schedule your appointments:

How often pregnant women should have prenatal appointments	
0 – 28 WEEKS:	1 visit every month
28 – 36 WEEKS:	1 visit every 2 weeks
36 WEEKS – BIRTH:	1 visit every week

Staying Healthy for the Baby

Here are some other ways you can keep your baby healthy during pregnancy:

Take prenatal vitamins as directed. Prenatal vitamins have more folic acid and iron than most other vitamins. Folic acid helps protect the baby's brain and spinal cord. Iron helps with blood and oxygen flow.

Maintain a healthy weight. Pregnant women are eating for 2 — but that doesn't mean double. It means to get enough vitamins and nutrients to help the baby grow. Eat a balanced diet of whole grains,

fruits and vegetables throughout pregnancy. Most pregnant women only need 200 more calories a day.

Don't drink alcohol. Drinking alcohol while pregnant can cause fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). This may cause birth defects, mental and learning disabilities, and vision and hearing problems.

Don't smoke. Smoking can cause low birth weight, birth defects and even loss of the baby. After birth, first- and second-hand smoke can increase the risk of many life-threatening diseases, including asthma and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). If you need help quitting, call 1-800-Quit-Now.

Get a Bright Start. AmeriHealth District of Columbia (DC) has a Bright Start® program that helps moms-to-be make healthy choices and control risk factors during pregnancy. Bright Start is at no cost for AmeriHealth DC members. You can reach the Bright Start program at 1-877-759-6883.

Post-Partum Care

Childbirth can be hard on the body. Try to get plenty of rest and drink plenty of water. Also, make sure to schedule follow-up visits with your doctor and your baby's pediatrician. The first well-baby visit should be 3 – 5 days after birth. And a mother's first post-partum visit should be 4–6 weeks after delivery. These visits help monitor how you and the baby are doing. Be sure to talk to your doctor right away if you begin to feel depressed for long periods of time. This could be a sign of post-partum depression. With a newborn to care for, remember that caring for yourself is also important.

Sources: Center for Disease Control, ChooseMyPlate.gov, MedlinePlus, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

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