

Reminders in Early Pregnancy

Eating multiple small meals daily, 5 – 7+, with a good balance of carbohydrates and protein usually keeps energy level and blood sugar in a better range.

Foods to Avoid Listeria is a bacteria found in certain foods. It can be harmful to pregnant women and their babies. Foods that should be avoided include: Raw, unpasteurized milk, soft cheeses; feta, brie, camembert, blue veined cheeses and Mexican style cheeses, refrigerated pate or meat spreads, refrigerated smoked seafood, often labeled “nova style”, “lox”, “kippered”, “smoked” or “jerky.” Hard cheeses and semi-soft cheeses such as mozzarella, cream cheese or cottage cheese can be eaten. Large fish, such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish should be avoided completely because of their high mercury content.

Foods to Limit To reduce the exposure to mercury and other chemical pollutants, pregnant women should eat only 12 ounces/week of *cooked* fish from a store or restaurant. Albacore “white” tuna should also be limited to 6 ounces/week. See information above on avoiding large fish. When traveling, please follow local advisories. For further details log on to www.epa.gov/ost/fish.

Morning Sickness Eating small, frequent meals consisting of dry, starchy foods and a high protein snack at bedtime is helpful for many patients with nausea. Strong odors and flavors, spicy or greasy foods should be avoided. Some helpful over-the-counter preparations are vitamin B6 (100mg/day), ginger (e.g. crystallized, ale, tea, snaps, Altoids, “Preggie Pops”), peppermint, and Unisom (an over-the-counter sleep aid). Vitamin supplementation can be modified in the first trimester (consider Folic acid only or Premesis brand prenatal vitamins).

Vitamins Iron supplementation is the most important (minimum 30mg/day) after the first trimester. Prescription or over-the-counter “prenatal” vitamins are often taken to meet the recommended guidelines in pregnancy, but vitamins are not a replacement for healthy eating habits. Strict vegetarians will need to consume additional vitamin D (400 IU) and 2mg B12 daily. Folic acid is beneficial prior to and after conception. Essential fatty acid/omega-3 supplementation (contaminant free) contributes to brain and eye development of the baby and may have additional benefits for the mother. Caution should be given to “mega-dose” vitamin regimens or high-dose supplements. Do not consume more than 8,000 IU of vitamin A daily. The safety of most “herbal” medications in pregnancy is not known.

Bowel Function Decreased bowel motility can lead to constipation in pregnancy. Increasing dietary fiber, fluid intake and exercise can often help this physiological change. Over-the-counter aids include colace and bulk fiber or water drawing laxatives (e.g. Metamucil, Citracel, Milk of Magnesia). Speak to your doctor if you need further assistance.

Exercise If you are already an exerciser, continue doing what you’re doing! Swimming or water-aerobic classes are perfect for pregnancy. Buoyancy, low-impact and multiple muscle-group features of water exercises are especially helpful. However, Jacuzzi, heated whirlpools and saunas should be avoided. Pregnancy is a time of increased metabolism, so listen to your body. The duration and intensity of exercise will need to be adjusted with the onset of pregnancy and as it progresses. Heart rate should be kept under 140 beats/minute. If you have not been exercising, pregnancy is not a time to start a rigorous program. Walking is preferable in this case.

Reading There are many popular books on pregnancy in bookstores and libraries. A couple of suggestions are: *The Glory to be Revealed in You; a Spiritual Companion to Pregnancy*, by Kristen West McGuire, Alba House, 1998; *What to Expect (from God) When You are Expecting*, by Cathy Hickling, Creation House, 1995 and *Prayer and Pregnancy* by Janet Alampi, St. Paul Book & Media 1995.

Talking/Praying/Writing Talking to, and praying for, the baby together is encouraging to Moms and Dads. In their own way, parents begin speaking to their little ones early in pregnancy. Welcome God’s presence and blessings as you do. Many women find journaling, keeping a diary of your thoughts and feelings, to be especially precious in pregnancy. Writing to the baby throughout the pregnancy is a beautiful way for parents to document the many unique dimensions of the bonding experience.

Other things to Avoid Changing your cat’s litter box may put you at risk for toxoplasmosis, which can be harmful to you and your baby.

We encourage you to write down your questions and bring them to your appointments so we can answer a few from visit to visit. If you have an emergent concern after business hours, our answering service can be reached by calling the office. Know we pray for you and your family daily. We are here for you.