

Benefits of knowing pregnancy status early

Early knowledge of pregnancy enables women to make informed choices about their health and obtain timely antenatal advice from healthcare professionals to make positive changes.¹ The advice provided by healthcare professionals should ideally be followed prior to conception. However, in the USA, an estimated 45% of pregnancies are reported to be unintended.² The earlier a woman finds out she is pregnant, the earlier she can make positive lifestyle changes.

Smoking

All pregnant women who smoke should be advised to stop.³ Behavioral interventions for smoking cessation should also be provided.³



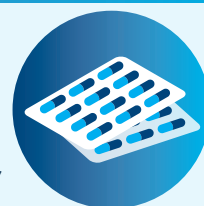
Alcohol

During pregnancy, there is no known safe amount of alcohol or safe time to drink.⁴ All types of alcohol are equally harmful, including all wines and beer.⁴ Women are advised not to drink alcohol at all when pregnant.⁵



Folic acid

In the early developmental stages, folic acid is known to help form the neural tube and can prevent some major birth defects of the brain (anencephaly) and spine (spina bifida).⁶ Pregnant women are advised to take at least 400µg of folic acid each day starting at least 1 month before conception and during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.⁷ Women who have already had a child with a neural tube defect are advised to take 4mg of folic acid each day for at least 3 months before conception, and for the first 3 months of pregnancy, as a separate supplement.⁷



Exercise

Pregnant women are advised to do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity per week during their pregnancy.⁸ Those who are already doing vigorous-intensity aerobic activities, such as running, can continue to do so during the course of their pregnancy.⁸



Caffeine

In pregnant women, moderate caffeine consumption (<200mg per day) does not appear to be a major contributing factor to miscarriage or preterm birth.⁹ The relationship between caffeine and growth restriction remains undetermined.⁹ For pregnant women with a high daily intake of caffeine (>300mg per day), lowering daily intake during pregnancy is recommended to reduce the risk of pregnancy loss and low-birthweight neonates.¹⁰



Diet

Foodborne illnesses, such as listeriosis and toxoplasmosis, can affect a fetus even if the pregnant woman does not feel unwell.¹¹ Physicians should provide pregnant women with specific guidelines about what food they should or should not consume.¹¹ Some of the foods pregnant women are advised to avoid are:¹¹

- Raw seafood – may contain bacteria or parasites
- Unpasteurized juice, cider, and milk – may contain Escherichia coli or Listeria
- Undercooked meat or poultry – may contain Escherichia coli, Salmonella, Campylobacter, Toxoplasma gondii
- Uncooked eggs – may contain salmonella



Prescription and over-the-counter medicines

Not all medicines are safe for pregnant women to take as some may cause birth defects, pregnancy loss, prematurity, infant death, or developmental disabilities.¹² Pregnant women should seek advice from a doctor or pharmacist about any medications (prescription, over-the-counter medications, and/or dietary or herbal supplements) they are taking.¹³

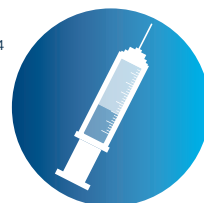


Vaccinations

Pregnant women are advised to get the following vaccines during every pregnancy:¹⁴

- **The inactivated flu vaccine** – if pregnant during the flu season
- **Tdap vaccine** – to protect against pertussis (whooping cough)

Evidence to date shows that COVID-19 vaccination is safe and effective during pregnancy, and beneficial to both mother and baby.¹⁵ Pregnant women are advised to stay up to date with their COVID-19 vaccines, including getting a COVID-19 booster shot when it is time to do so.¹⁵



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