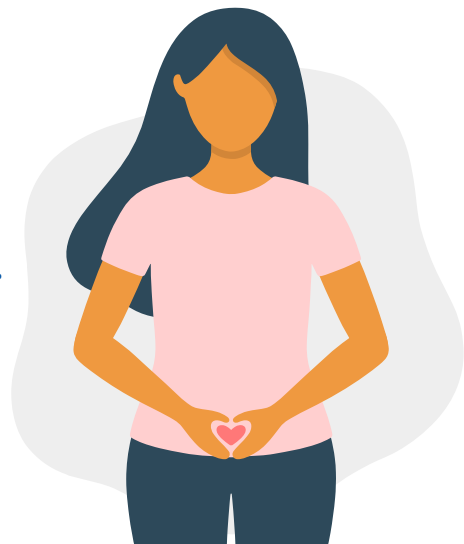


Early pregnancy facts

Evidence based answers to your early pregnancy questions.



1. What's happening in my body at the very beginning?

- About 6-7 days after conception, the embryo that was formed by combining an egg and a sperm makes a connection with your womb (uterus). This is known as implantation.
- Once the connection is made, the cells of the embryo begin to release a pregnancy hormone called human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG).

2. How do I know if I am pregnant?

- Urine tests check for hCG and tell you positive or negative
- Blood tests check the exact level of hCG hormone in your body. Not everyone needs these tests.

3. What kind of symptoms of pregnancy could I start to feel?

- Extreme fatigue caused by high levels of a hormone called progesterone and increased work by the body due to the growing pregnancy
- Nausea caused by quickly rising hCG hormone levels
- Breast tenderness caused by rising levels of hormones (progesterone & estrogen)
- Bloating caused by slowing of the bowels because of the high progesterone levels

4. What if I am having cramping or vaginal bleeding in early pregnancy?

- Cramping can be normal due to implantation and growth of the pregnancy in your womb.
- Spotting or very light bleeding can sometimes be normal due to implantation of the embryo or a small area of blood clot near where the pregnancy is growing. This is called a subchorionic hematoma (SCH).

5. Do I need a blood test in early pregnancy?

- You may need blood drawn if you have a history of pregnancy loss or if you have vaginal bleeding more than just spotting or pain that is more than mild cramping.
- Tests include hCG level, progesterone level, and blood type

6. What do the blood test results mean?

- Your provider will contact you with a full explanation of your results but here are some basics.
- hCG should usually increase by ~50% in 48 hours. Sometimes, it even doubles in number.
- There is no specific progesterone level that confirms a "normal" pregnancy.
- However, progesterone level <6.2 ng/mL is linked with a very high chance (~99%) of a pregnancy not being normal. It could be a possible miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy.

7. What should I know about miscarriage and ectopic pregnancies?

- 10% of pregnancies end in a miscarriage
- 2% of pregnancies are ectopic (embryo growing outside uterus)
- Signs of ectopic pregnancy and miscarriage can be very similar.
- Vaginal bleeding with intense pelvic cramping or severe abdominal pain.
- Passing large blood clots or thick tissue through the vagina.
- Feeling faint, passing out, or extreme dizziness.

8. How do I know my due date?

- Most of the time, due dates are calculated from the first day of your last menstrual period and matched up with the pregnancy growth measurement at the time of your first ultrasound.
- You and your provider will finalize your due date at your first visit with an ultrasound.

Early pregnancy facts

9. What should I know about medications and pregnancy?

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) is the medicine of choice for pain and headaches in pregnancy. Despite recent press regarding using acetaminophen in pregnancy, our experts still recommend its use. As with all medications, it should only be used as needed, in moderation, and after the pregnant patient has consulted with their provider.
- Avoid: pseudoephedrine (Sudafed), ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), naproxen (Aleve)
- Ask your provider which medications to keep taking or stop taking for other health problems (diabetes, high blood pressure, seizure disorders, low thyroid, and mental health issues).
- A good source for information about medicines during pregnancy is www.mothertobaby.org

10. What should not go in my body while pregnant?

- A balanced diet is key to a healthy pregnancy. MyPlate.gov has excellent eating resources.
- Do not eat raw or undercooked seafood, eggs, meat & poultry, unpasteurized dairy products (milk, cheese, etc.), hot dogs or deli meats (unless heated to steaming hot just before serving), refrigerated pâté and meat spreads, refrigerated smoked seafood, and unwashed raw produce (fruits and veggies). This is to avoid exposure to bacteria like e. coli and listeria.
- Do not eat bigeye tuna, king mackerel, marlin, orange roughy, shark, swordfish, or tilefish to avoid high levels of mercury that can be found in these fish.

- No alcohol, tobacco, or other recreational drugs including marijuana.

11. What about physical activity? Do I have any restrictions?

- Although these can be fun activities, you should avoid hot yoga, scuba diving, high altitude activities (above 6000 ft), contact sports and activities with a high risk of falling down (skiing, snowboarding, water sports, skydiving, soccer, basketball, gymnastics, horseback riding, etc.)
- It is ok to exercise as you normally do with the above exceptions. Do not start a new intense exercise routine without talking to your provider.
- This might not be exercise, but if you have an outdoor cat, no more cleaning the litter boxes at home. This is to avoid exposure to toxoplasmosis, a parasite found in cat poop.

12. What if I have a lot of nausea or vomiting?

- Natural Nausea Remedies
 - Bland foods can be your best friend. Crackers are a favorite but you can also try the BRATT diet (bananas, rice, applesauce, toast, and tea).
 - Eat what tastes good; avoid an empty stomach by eating small frequent meals.
 - Ginger tea/candy/ale/capsules can also help with nausea.
 - Vitamin B6 (25 mg by mouth 1 to 4 times per day). Vitamin B6 can be taken alone or combined with doxylamine (Unisom) (25 mg by mouth at night).
- If you are losing weight or not able to keep any food or fluids down, call your provider.

Sources

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