

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where do I call for “after hour” emergencies?

If you are an established patient, please call the main office number and listen for the prompt instructing you to leave a message for the nurse on-call. After leaving your message the on-call nurse will be notified and she will return your call. Please limit these calls to emergencies only. The on-call nurse will not be able to tell you when your next appointment is, what your test results are and why someone may have called you from the office. Prescriptions are refilled during regular business hours only. General medical advice should be taken care of during regular office hours.

When do I come in for my first prenatal appointment?

Generally we recommend that you have missed a period and have had a positive pregnancy test either done at home or at your doctor’s office or Health Department. If you have a history or risk factors for a tubal pregnancy, you should call our office and be seen immediately. If you have other medical complications please call the office.

Can I travel in pregnancy?

If the pregnancy is uncomplicated, traveling is generally safe until the 34-36 week range depending on where and for how long you will be traveling. Cruise ships often limit travel after the 24th week. If traveling by car for 1-2 hours, be sure to take stop breaks to get out and walk around and stretch your legs to prevent the possibility of any blood clots forming. Please be sure to tell us before you go on any trips.

Can I see my dentist while I’m pregnant?

Yes, dental care is very important in pregnancy. Periodontal disease is a risk factor for preterm labor. A dental exam with abdominal shielding is safe, as are the commonly used local anesthetics. Usually the dentist will require a clearance letter from us in order for them to treat you. Call our office and we will take care of that letter for you.

Can I get a prenatal massage?

Prenatal massages are safe and enjoyable in pregnancy when given by a qualified massage therapist. Make sure you do not lie flat on your abdomen or back.

When do I call the office if I think I'm in labor?

Unless you have been instructed otherwise, call the office (or after hours nurse on-call) when:

- 1 You have hard contractions at least every five minutes for at least one hour.
- 2 You think you may have broken your bag of water.
- 3 Vaginal bleeding that is more than a little spotting.
- 4 Your contractions continue even when you lie down to rest.

Can I eat the day I have my one hour glucose screen?

The 28 week glucose screening testing is simply a screening test and doesn't have any special dietary restrictions. This is NOT a fasting test. You should only fast if you are specifically told to by a nurse or doctor at our office.

What can I do for cold and allergy symptoms if I'm pregnant?

Colds are miserable things, even at the best of times, but there are especially miserable when you are pregnant. Many things can help to relieve symptoms at home, sometimes eliminating the need for an office visit.

- 1 Use a cool mist vaporizer/humidifier at night. This moistens the air you breathe to keep secretions flowing.
- 2 Saline gargles (one teaspoon of salt in ½ cup warm water) every four hours while awake will cut the mucus in the back of the throat and relieves mild soreness.
- 3 Any brand of saline nose drops at bedtime and on arising in the morning will help moisten secretions.
- 4 Tylenol two tablets every four to six hours if necessary for aches (maximum of six tablets in 24 hours).
- 5 Take your temperature; call us if your temperature is greater than 100.5 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 6 Coughing can be relieved with one teaspoon of honey and 2-3 drops of lemon juice. Hold this in your mouth until the honey thins and then swallow. If cough interrupts sleep or causes vomiting, you may try Robitussin DM.
- 7 Increase fluids (especially water).
- 8 Get plenty of rest, if possible.
- 9 Sudafed may also be used for symptoms of congestion when taken as directed on the package. Try to use sparingly in your first trimester.

Can I color or perm my hair during pregnancy?

Often pregnant women have concerns about the safety of hair dyes and perms during pregnancy. There is no scientific data on this question, but it seems unlikely that these types of exposures

are harmful.

Are hot tubs and tanning booths safe during pregnancy?

The use of saunas, hot tubs, and tanning booths is not recommended during pregnancy. The extreme temperature could potentially damage the developing baby. Extremely hot baths are not recommended during pregnancy. Bath temperatures should be below 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

What can I do for nausea and vomiting “morning sickness” during pregnancy?

It often happens in the morning but can occur at any time of the day.

The following suggestions may be useful in relieving nausea and vomiting:

- 1 Remember, “any calorie is a good calorie” so eat what stays down for you.
- 2 Stay away from these foods:
 - Greasy or fried foods, as they take longer to leave the stomach
 - Very sweet foods
 - Spicy, hot foods
 - Foods with strong odors
- 1 Eat smaller, more frequent meals; six small meals and snacks per day.
- 2 Eat slowly and rest after meals. It is best to rest sitting in an upright position for about one hour after eating.
- 3 Dry toast, saltine crackers, or dry pre-sweetened cereals may relieve periods of nausea.
- 4 Keep track of when you feel nauseated and what caused it and don't eat it anymore.
- 5 If continued vomiting occurs, do not eat or drink anything until the vomiting has stopped. As you feel better, try some small amounts of clear liquids (water, ginger ale, broth, popsicles, and/or jell-o)
- 6 Tart or salty foods such as lemons or pickles may help decrease nausea.
- 7 Avoid eating in a room that is stuffy, too warm, or has cooking smells/odors that may disagree with you.
- 8 Wear loose fitting clothing.
- 9 Ask your doctor about a prescription to control nausea.

- 10 These are signs that you need to call your doctor:
 - Unable to keep anything down for more than two days
 - Fainting
 - Vomiting blood
 - Rib pain
 - Your weigh drops more than five pounds within a week

Is it safe to continue working during pregnancy?

Most of the time, a healthy woman with no complications in her pregnancy can keep working until the end of her pregnancy. Some may need to make some changes. If you are experiencing problems that you feel may be related to your job, please discuss this at one of your office appointments. Your family should be able to help you at home as fatigue increases at the end of your pregnancy.

Is it normal for swelling to occur?

A certain amount of swelling (called edema) is normal during pregnancy. It occurs most often in the legs. Elevating the legs usually makes the swelling less by the next morning. Swelling can begin during the middle to the last few months of pregnancy, and it may occur more often in the summer. Let your doctor or nurse know if you have swelling in your hands and/or face, because this may be a sign of another problem. A clue that your hands are swollen is that your rings are too tight. Never take medications (water pills) for swelling unless they have been prescribed for you by us.

- 1 Elevate your legs when possible
- 2 Rest in bed on your side; never lay flat on your back
- 3 Lie down with your legs raised on several pillows
- 4 Do not wear tight or binding socks
- 5 If you sit a lot working, stand up and move from time to time
- 6 Try not to stand still for long periods of time

What can I do for headaches during pregnancy?

Headaches are common during pregnancy. Usually headaches do not signal a serious problem. How often they occur and how bad they are may vary. You should contact your doctor if your headache does not go away after taking Tylenol, returns very often, is very severe, causes blurry vision or spots in front of your eyes, or is accompanied by nausea. You may use two Tylenol or two Ex-Tylenol for headaches.

What can I do to relieve constipation?

At least half of all pregnant women seem to have problems with constipation. One reason for this may be changes in hormones that slow the movement of food through the digestive tract. Sometimes iron supplements may also cause constipation. During the last part of pregnancy, pressure on your rectum from your uterus may add to the problem. Here are some suggestions

that may help:

- 1 Drink plenty of liquids – at least 6-8 glasses of water each day, including 1-2 glasses of fruit juice such as prune juice. Liquids (such as coffee, tea and cola) you should avoid. They will tend to create a negative water balance in you body and thus make your stools harder and more difficult to pass.
- 2 Eat food high in fiber, such as raw fruits and vegetables and bran cereals.
- 3 Exercise daily – walking is a good form of exercise.

Are leg cramps normal during pregnancy?

In the last three months of pregnancy, you may find that you have more leg cramps. Get plenty of calcium (three glasses of milk or supplement) and potassium (oranges or bananas). Stretching your legs before going to bed can help relieve cramps. Avoid pointing your toes when stretching or exercising.

Is it safe to paint during pregnancy?

Latex paints manufactured before 1991 used small amounts of mercury as a preservative. There was some concern that this mercury could present a health hazard, so mercury is no longer used in latex paints. The fumes from latex paints are not felt to be a specific risk to a developing baby, but it is always wise to paint in a well-ventilated area. The fumes from oil-based paint, turpentine, paint thinner, etc., are best avoided by pregnant women. Also, remember when painting to avoid use of a ladder to reduce the risk of injuries due to a fall.

Can I have sexual intercourse during pregnancy?

Some people worry about having intercourse during pregnancy. They may be afraid it will cause a miscarriage. For a healthy woman, with a normal pregnancy, intercourse is safe into the last weeks of pregnancy. For your comfort, you and your partner may want to try different positions. Your doctor or midwife may advise you to limit or avoid sex if there are signs of problems in your pregnancy.

What can I do to help prevent heartburn?

Indigestion is commonly called heartburn, but it does not mean that anything is wrong with your heart. It is a burning feeling that starts in the stomach and seems to rise into the throat. It occurs when digested food from your stomach, which contains acid, is pushed up into your esophagus (the tube leading from the throat to the stomach).

Changes that take place in your body during pregnancy may worsen indigestion. Changes in your hormone levels slow digestion and relax the muscle that normally prevents the digested

food and acids in your stomach from entering the esophagus. In addition, your growing uterus presses up on your stomach.

To help relieve heartburn, try the following:

- 1 Eat five or six small meals a day instead of two or three large ones. (A glass of fluid may be equal in volume to a small meal, so avoid drinking large amounts of fluids with meals.)
- 2 Avoid foods that cause gas, such as spicy or greasy foods.
- 3 Do not eat or drink several hours before bedtime.
- 4 Wait two hours after eating before exercising.
- 5 Antacids may be helpful, such as Maalox, Tums, or Gaviscon. Liquid will be more effective than tablets. If the problem is frequent and only briefly relieved by antacids, speak with your doctor or midwife.
- 6 Avoid caffeine drinks, chocolate and citrus fruits.

Are hemorrhoids common during pregnancy?

Very often pregnant women who are constipated also have hemorrhoids. Hemorrhoids are varicose (or swollen) veins of the rectum. They are often painful. Straining during bowel movements and having very hard stools may make hemorrhoids worse and can sometimes cause them to protrude from the rectum.

Do not take drugstore cures while you are pregnant without first checking with your doctor or nurse. Hemorrhoids usually improve after the baby is born. Several things can help give relief or avoid the problem in the first place:

- 1 Avoid getting constipated.
- 2 Eat a high-fiber diet.
- 3 Drink plenty of liquids
- 4 You may use Tucks pads, and anusol cream if needed.

Are yeast infections common during pregnancy?

It is sometimes common to develop a yeast infection during pregnancy. If such an infection does occur, it is safe to use over the counter Monistat. If you are less than 12 weeks only apply the Monistat on the outside. If the Monistat does not help then call your doctor.

Can I take herbs and extra vitamins during my pregnancy?

No, your prenatal vitamins should be the only supplement used during pregnancy unless your

provider specifically directs you to.

What is round ligament pain?

During pregnancy, a woman can experience many aches and pains. Sometimes it is difficult to know if these pains are something to worry about or not. As your baby and uterus grow, your body must adjust. You may feel a pull of sudden sharp pain low in your stomach area. This is called round ligament pain. The round ligaments are like bands hooked to both sides of the womb to hold it in place. The pain is caused by the baby growing and stretching these bands. This pain is felt sometimes after standing or after sitting for a long time. You can make this pain better by getting up slowly when sitting, so the bands can stretch gradually. Also try soaking in a warm bath. Lying on the painful side with a pillow placed between your knees helps. You may take two Tylenol and use a heating pad on medium heat to your abdomen.

What is a full-term pregnancy?

A full-term pregnancy is 9 completed months. Your doctors and nurses will usually describe your pregnancy as lasting 40 weeks. By using 40 weeks, this helps them make the best decisions for your pregnancy. Your due date and the 3 weeks before are the times when it is safe to have your baby if you go into labor. If you go into labor before 37 weeks it is considered premature labor.

What are some signs of premature labor? What should I do?

When you go into labor more than 3 weeks before your due date, it is called premature or early labor. It is very important to pay attention to what your body is doing during your pregnancy.

Signs of premature labor can be subtle. You need to watch for the following:

- 1 Menstrual cramps in pregnancy can be a sign of preterm labor.
- 2 Dull ache in your lower back that comes and goes and isn't relieved by Tylenol or position changes.
- 3 Contractions every 10 minutes or more: painful or discomfort.
- 4 Bright red vaginal bleeding/discharge.
- 5 If your belly keeps getting real tight you might be having preterm contractions.
- 6 If it seems like the baby keeps 'balling up' a lot you might be having preterm contractions.
- 7 Constant, leaking water from your vagina might be a sign that your water broke.

If you have any symptoms of premature labor, stop what you are doing. Lie down and rest for a while. Also, make sure you are drinking lots of water. Try to drink 5 or 6 glasses of water. Go to the bathroom frequently to empty your bladder. If things do not get better you should call your doctor.

What are Braxton-Hicks contractions?

As your body gets ready for birth, you may feel tightening in your lower belly. This is known as false labor or Braxton-Hicks contractions. These contractions might come and go. If they keep getting stronger and more regular then it might be real labor. You may need to call your doctor if you have these before 37 weeks and they become painful.

Is it OK to exercise when I am pregnant?

Exercise during pregnancy is good because it helps to make you and your baby health. It can help make labor and delivery easier. Exercise helps you control your weight so you don't gain too many extra pounds. Before starting an exercise program, talk to your doctor first. Try to exercise 2 to 3 times a week for 20-30 minutes. If you exercised before pregnancy, you should be able to continue the same during early pregnancy. Keep in mind your body is changing with your growing baby so you may need to slow down if you feel dizzy or faint. As you move into your last months of your pregnancy, you may need to slow your exercising down. A good rule of thumb is to listen to your body and if you begin to feel very tired, short of breath or faint stop. The best type of exercise for pregnant women to do is walking.

What is “bloody-show”?

A bloody show is a small amount of bloody mucous seen at anytime in the final month of pregnancy. This usually occurs after you have lost your mucous plug. Although it is a good sign that your cervix may be softening in preparation for dilation it does not always mean you are going to labor. It may occur from 2 weeks to 1 hour before delivery. It may also occur within 24 hours after a pelvic examination. If this occurs you do not have to come into the hospital. Continue to monitor for any other signs of labor. **HEAVY VAGINAL BLEEDING IS NEVER A SIMPLE BLOODY SHOW.** If heavy bleeding occurs you should call your doctor and /or go straight to the hospital.

What should I do if I cannot feel the baby move?

Most pregnant women will not feel the baby move until approximately 20 weeks. You should always feel the baby move after 24 weeks. Many times if you are busy you may not notice them although there is movement occurring. If you notice no movements, stop what you are doing, drink something sweet such as orange juice or a cola, and lay on your left side in a quiet room. You should have 10 movements in an hour. Any movement counts. If not, then call the office immediately or proceed to hospital.

What is a pap smear?

A pap smear is a screening test for cervical cancer. Unlike many other cancers, cervical cancer can occur frequently in young patients. That is because the #1 cause of cervical cancer and pre-cancer is the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). It is a common virus with no cure and is

sexually transmitted. In most patients it has no symptoms or warnings although some patients may develop warts. Most males can carry the virus with no symptoms. The new vaccine to protect against HPV called GARDISIL is now available in our office for our patients between the ages of 9 and 26.

The pap smear is not a test for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). If you want to be tested for STDs then you need to tell your doctor or nurse.

When do I need a pap smear?

You first pap smear should occur within the first 2 years after your first sexual intercourse experience or by the age of 21 years old whichever comes first.

What is a Colposcopy?

It is a procedure that is done if you have an abnormal pap smear result that is indicative of possible pre-cancer cells. Remember a pap smear is only a screening test and may be wrong. The colposcopy is a procedure where the doctor looks at the cervix through a microscope, after cleaning the cervix off with a vinegar-based solution. The doctor may elect to perform a biopsy of the cervix to determine if pre-cancerous cells (known as dysplasia) are present. The biopsies are tiny and the procedure takes about 15 minutes. You may have some light bleeding for 1-2 days afterward with some mild cramping only. You should not have sex for 1 week after the procedure; otherwise you may resume normal activity. Results take 7-10 days to come back.

What is a LEEP procedure?

If the colposcopy shows dysplasia (pre-cancer) on your cervix then a LEEP procedure is used to remove the abnormal cells and its surrounding tissue. It is done in the office under local anesthesia (lidocaine). It takes about 15 minutes to complete. You will experience some discharge, bleeding, and cramping for 1-3 days after the procedure. You should refrain from sex or tampon use for at least 1-2 weeks as instructed by your doctor. If you experience heavy bleeding, then you should call the office.

What is an endometrial biopsy?

An endometrial biopsy is performed in the office to evaluate abnormal bleeding. It is done to obtain tissue from the lining of the uterus (the endometrium). It is very quick and you may feel mild cramping during the procedure. You may also have some mild cramping and spotting for 24 -48 hours afterwards. It is never performed during pregnancy.

How long do I have to wait after the delivery of my baby to have sex?

Please wait until you are given the okay to have sexual intercourse by your doctor at your six week postpartum visit.

Why is the first cycle after delivery so heavy?

It is very common for your first cycle after pregnancy to be heavy. The lining of the uterus is shed during your cycle and this is often very thick and may cause clotting. If you are soaking a pad in an hour for more than 4 hours you need to call your doctor.