

Resource Guide

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Promising Pregnancies / Embarazos Prometedores Prenatal Pointers

Hooray!! What an exciting and important time of your life! Bringing another life into this world is full of challenges, opportunities and pitfalls. **Promising Pregnancies / Embarazos Prometedores** is here to help keep your pregnancy on a healthy track and avoid as many of those pitfalls as possible.

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Weight Gain: Not too Much

- If you are planning a pregnancy, make sure you are at a healthy weight as you begin trying to get pregnant.
- Your health professional will be able to monitor your weight through your pregnancy, making sure you are gaining enough, but not too much.
- It is important to avoid excessive weight gain between pregnancies.
- Breastfeeding moms have a greater weight loss between pregnancies than formula moms.
- Overweight / obesity is the most common pregnancy

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complication in developed countries.

- Mothers who gain 40+ pounds during pregnancy double the risk of having a heavy baby.
- Obesity during pregnancy increases the risk of obesity in 2-4 year olds by two-fold and obese children are more likely to become obese adults.
- Gaining too much weight during pregnancy makes it more difficult to lose excess weight after pregnancy.
- Overweight and obese women share a greater risk of:
 1. having a preterm (under 37 weeks) baby....the higher the weight the greater the risk
 2. preeclampsia (high blood pressure)
 3. induction of labor
 4. C-sections
 5. post-partum hemorrhage
 6. birth defects (neural tube and heart)
 7. babies becoming obese (see above)
 8. gestational diabetes.

Gestational diabetes is high blood sugar levels first seen during pregnancy. Usually there are mild or no symptoms other than the increased blood sugar levels. However, women should be tested between the 24th and 28th week of pregnancy, or earlier, if there are risk factors.

Risk Factors for Gestational Diabetes

- family history of diabetes
- older than 25 when pregnant
- have given birth to a baby weighing over 9 pounds
- have high blood pressure
- overweight before pregnancy
- have sugar in urine during prenatal care visits
- have too much amniotic fluid
- had unexplained miscarriage or stillbirth

Signs of Gestational Diabetes

- fatigue
- blurred vision
- increased thirst
- more need to urinate
- frequent infections
- vomiting and nausea
- unexplained weight loss

Complications of Untreated Gestational Diabetes

- early delivery
- C-section
- higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- greater risk of child developing diabetes
- increased weight/size of baby
- more difficult births
- increased risk of infant death

Treatment for Gestational Diabetes

- regular check-ups by your health care provider
- regular fetal monitoring to check baby's size and health
- home testing of blood sugar levels
- diets providing a balance of a variety of healthy foods
- limiting high sugar foods and drinks
- a health professional's guidance on dietary and supplement information
- monitored activity/exercise program.

Treated gestational diabetes usually results in no further pregnancy or birth complications and the return of normal blood sugar levels after birth.

Weight Gain: Too Little

Always check with your health care provider about weight issues related to pregnancy. There have been professional advice swings in each direction. Too much weight gain is a problem, but so is too little weight gain. Since each person is different, each with their own particular set of circumstances, it is important to be evaluated by a professional health care provider who takes all aspects of your life into consideration. There may be supplements and/or prenatal vitamins recommended to protect your and your baby's health. It is dangerous to diagnose and prescribe for and by yourself.

Risks of Too Little Weight Gain:

- poor fetal growth
- babies born too early
- babies born at a lower birth weight
- infants with delayed development
- babies born malnourished
- babies born with lung and/or heart problems
- not eating enough to meet the developing baby's needs can deplete the resources of the mother
- babies may have increased risk for obesity and high blood pressure later in life.

Reasons for Too Little Weight Gain:

- morning sickness, nausea
- poor nutritional habits before pregnancy
- eating disorders / body image problems
- hormonal changes that cause fatigue so the mother doesn't feel motivated to fix a healthy meal.

How to Counter Low Weight Gain:

- Avoid foods/smells that cause nausea.
- Don't skip meals, especially breakfast.
- Eat more frequent, small meals.

- When hungry, eat more, increase your portion sizes.
- Increase the good fats...nuts, seeds, avocados, olive and canola oils, fatty fish, peanut butter.
- Consume high calorie protein drinks between meals or when not hungry enough for a meal.
- Snack on healthy foods---peanut butter, cottage cheese, cheese, yogurt with fruits and veggies or whole grain breads and crackers.
- Avoid junk and fast foods. They may be high in calories, but they are low in nutrition.
- Use whole milk and dairy products.
- Exercise to improve your appetite.

Healthy Diets = Healthy Pregnancies = Healthy Babies

Now is the perfect time to start a healthy regime to enjoy a problem-free pregnancy, produce a healthy baby and raise a healthy family. All the positive changes made during pregnancy are important while breastfeeding, raising healthy children and setting the examples that will lead your children to make healthy choices throughout their lifetimes. Don't squander all the time and energy put into a healthy pregnancy by falling back into negative, unhealthy patterns and habits!!!

Again, refer to your health care provider to make sure you are:

- Eating enough protein
- Getting enough iron
- Ingesting enough calcium
- Eating balanced, healthy meals with enough variety
- Have correct vitamin/prenatal supplements (especially folic acid)

Pitfalls: What to Avoid

Nearly all the items mentioned in *Promising Pregnancies, The Dietary Don'ts* are habit forming, some to the point of addiction. Unfortunately, the negative effects of these substances will also impact your developing child in the same way they affect you.

- **Caffeine:** Too much caffeine is a stimulant and can make you jittery and interfere with sleep. It can also constrict uterine blood vessels restricting the blood flow carrying oxygen and nutrients to the fetus. The amount of caffeine in your blood is matched in your baby's blood as well.
- **Artificial Sweeteners:** The controversy surrounding these chemical sweetening combinations should warn you of the lack of agreement to their safety and should be avoided, especially during pregnancy.
- **Herbal Teas:** Check with your health care provider to make sure the natural ingredients don't have any side effects you should be aware of (may contain estrogen, allergens, etc.).
- **Cigarettes:** The studies have been done and the conclusions are beyond doubt--cigarettes can kill you and do contribute to the leading causes of death in the US, and soon, the world. Even if they don't kill you, they will compromise your quality of life, deplete finances and definitely have an impact on your developing baby. In fact, children are affected by smoking in three ways:
 1. **1st hand smoke**, that the mother breathes, affects her health and well-being and directly affects a developing fetus (see page 7 in *Promising Pregnancies*).
 2. **2nd hand smoke** is what the newborn breathes as a by-product of the mother's and other smokers' actions.
 3. **3rd hand smoke** is the residue that falls from the air and lands on carpets, floors, furniture, bodies, etc. that is then touched by the baby. And where do those hands go? The Mouth!!

If you are trying to quit smoking, check with your health care provider to make sure the method(s) you use are safe for the fetus.

- **Street Drugs:** Street drugs refers to all drugs that are illegal, not prescribed, and/or available only on the street. Some of these substances are addictive for you and your developing baby. The debilitating side effects are too numerous to mention here. If you have a problem with any of these substances, please tell your health care provider who will help you find a way out of the habits that deplete your health, finances, safety and peace of mind.

If you want help with a substance abuse problem check:

- www.nationalsubstanceabuseindex.org and click on your state for local references
 - www.drugfree.org
 - www.plannedparenthood.org .
- **Alcohol:** There is no established safe level of drinking while pregnant. In fact, alcohol consumption during pregnancy has been associated with:
 - Fetal alcohol syndrome that results in babies born with unusually small heads, certain heart defects and mental problems
 - Greater risks of miscarriage
 - Lower birth weights
 - Inebriated mothers have a greater risk of falling
 - Inebriated mothers often have impaired judgment.
 - **Over-the counter drugs:** As soon as you know you are pregnant, or are planning to get pregnant, be sure and tell your health care provider if you are on any prescribed or over-the-counter drugs. Most drugs have not been tested for fetal safety.

Staying Active

- When pregnant, before starting, increasing or stopping an exercise program, consult your health care professional. Maintaining an activity program through pregnancy has many benefits, but you must make sure it does not endanger you or your developing baby.
- Activity/exercise does not increase the risk for miscarriage in a low-risk pregnancy.
- Include your partner in activity sessions.
- If you are beginning an activity program remember to:
 - Start slow.
 - Wear comfortable clothes and shoes with support.
 - Take frequent breaks and stay well hydrated.
 - Avoid uneven or rocky terrains. Your joints become looser during pregnancy and more injuries can occur.
 - Avoid contact sports, exercising to exhaustion or in extremely hot weather.
 - Avoid strenuous activity before sleep.
 - Participate in weight training with a professional aware of pregnancy concerns and limitations.
 - Remember to stretch. Include yoga, tai chi and other forms of exercise for relaxation and stretching.

Importance of Sleep

The challenges of sleep are broken down into the three trimesters in *Promising Pregnancies*. Since your body is going through so many physical and hormonal changes all at the same time, sleep can come out on the short end of things. Grab sleep whenever you can find it. Be sure to take up offers of help from family and friends to help you get more sleep.

A great way to relax and involve your partner in the pregnancy is through massage. Visit www.homepregnancymassage.net and see all the benefits massage can offer at this time.

Managing Stress

Stress is a part of our daily lives. It keeps us on our toes, sharpens our senses and motivates us to get things done. However, too much stress or not handling it well can deplete our energy, put us on edge and destroy our quality of life.

More and more studies are being conducted on the effects of stress in our lives....from the womb to the grave. The stress of a pregnancy, especially if unplanned or unwanted, can challenge the best of us. Make sure to check the ways to manage stress listed in *Promising Pregnancies* for help.

Also visit www.homepregnancymassage.net and be amazed at the benefits to be enjoyed in stress reduction in the comfort of your own home.

It is very important that you have a support group (family, friends, other pregnant women, health care centers, church groups, etc.) where you feel comfortable talking about your hopes, dreams, fears, and concerns. Sharing burdens lightens them. Knowing you are not alone in how you think and feel adds comfort and camaraderie to your life.

ASK FOR HELP. Those who care about you are looking for ways to help. Tell them what you need....and what you don't need. Accept offers of help. It is not a sign of weakness or inability to cope, but a way to include others in the process.

You are not Wonder Woman....no matter what you expect of yourself. Some additional ways to manage stress include:

- Reduce housework/chores responsibilities
- Get out in nature. Enjoy the natural rhythms of life.
- Go to bed early, sleep in, grab a nap.
- Use your sick days at work. Take an afternoon off.

- Too Much Information! Don't peruse the web, listen to too many experiences of others or read every available book, article, etc. on pregnancy.
- Think about what you **do** want....not what you fear. Visualize a problem-free pregnancy and a healthy child. Focus on what you want...not what you don't want.
- Relax with the knowledge that you are not the first person to give birth, that thousands of other mothers are experiencing exactly what you are at exactly the same time, and that medical help has never been more sophisticated or available.
- Watch movies that entertain, read books you enjoy, spend time with people who make you feel good. Do things that make you laugh. Don't waste energy on things that bring you down or increase your stress.

Calendar of Events

Following the text in *Promising Pregnancies* will be:

- birth bag checklist
- important names and numbers log
- monthly calendars to track appointments, dates, weight, notes and reminders
- heads-up notations to prepare you for what's coming.

All of this information will handily be in one place for easy use. And, I think, the best part is it will always serve as a memento/log/journal/diary of this special time in your life.

Keeping in mind "too much information", here are some pregnancy related websites and apps to check out:

- www.whattoexpect.com - a weekly pregnancy calendar
- www.welcomebabyhome.com - free video pregnancy calendar

Apps:

- Luv Dub (to share baby's heartbeat)
- Contraction Master (to help monitor contractions)
- iThank You (help tracking gifts and thank you's)
- Baby Bump (tracks prenatal development).

Above all else, relax, breathe deep and enjoy your role in the miracle of life!

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