

## Obstetrical FAQs

### **Which over the counter medications are safe to use in pregnancy?**

Click [here](#) to view a list of over the counter medications that are safe to use.

### **When will I have my first prenatal visit?**

Unless you are having complications, your first OB visit should be around 8 weeks gestation. However, if you are unsure of your last menstrual period or have a history of miscarriage, we would like to see you for a "confirmation of pregnancy" visit sooner than 8 weeks. Please call the office to schedule your initial visit once you have missed a period or have a positive home pregnancy test.

### **How long will the first visit take?**

Your initial visit will take about 1-1 1/2 hours. You can expect to see your baby for the first time on ultrasound and will get to listen to his / her heartbeat. After that, you will meet with one of our certified nurse midwives. She will review your health history as well as basic procedures you can expect throughout your pregnancy. Once you are finished talking with her, you will head to our in office lab where you will have some basic blood work drawn.

### **How often will I need to come for my visits?**

You can expect to be seen every four weeks until you are 32 weeks gestation. You will then be seen every two weeks from 32-36 weeks. Weekly visits will start at 36 weeks and continue until delivery.

### **What tests will I have done during my pregnancy?**

At your initial OB visit, you will receive a pap smear, vaginal culture, and have some basic blood work drawn. Also at that visit, the midwife will discuss two optional tests that you can have done, one being the First Trimester Screening that is done through our local perinatologist's office. The First Trimester Screening is an early test for genetic abnormalities and birth defects. The second test she will discuss with you is for Cystic Fibrosis, which is a genetic disease that affects the lungs and digestive system. Since both of these tests are optional and are considered screening tools for genetic abnormalities, not all insurances will cover them. We recommend contacting your insurance to discuss your coverage if you are interested in having them done.

Between 15-20 weeks you will be offered a Quad Marker Screening. The Quad Marker is a blood test that determines if a women is at a higher or lower risk for carrying a baby with a birth defect or chromosomal abnormality. Since this is considered a genetic screening, we recommend contacting your insurance to discuss your coverage if you are planning to have this done.

You will have a 1 hour glucose tolerance test and CBC between 24-28 weeks. The glucose tolerance test is done to screen for gestational diabetes and the CBC (Complete Blood Count) is done to evaluate the three major types of cells in the blood: red blood cells, white blood cells, and platelets.

If you are Rh negative, you will receive an injection called Rhogam at 28 weeks. This can be done at any of our local hospitals.

Around 36 weeks you will be tested for a bacteria called Group Beta Strep and will also have another CBC drawn. Group Beta Strep (GBS) is a type of bacteria that is found in 10-30% of pregnant women and is one of the many bacteria that live in the body and usually doesn't cause any harm. However, GBS can be passed to the baby during labor and delivery. If this happens, the illness can cause serious health problems and can even be life threatening.

Your Physician or Midwife will discuss each of these tests in more detail and will be able to answer any questions you may have during your appointments.

### **What happens if I test positive for Group Beta Strep?**

If you test positive, you will be treated with antibiotics during labor to help prevent the spread of infection to the baby.

### **How many sonograms will I have?**

You will have a total of 3 sonograms throughout your pregnancy. The first sonogram will be done at your initial ob visit. This sonogram is done to confirm your due date and to make sure the pregnancy is progressing appropriately. Your second sonogram, the "Anatomy Sonogram", is done around 20 weeks. Around 37 weeks you will have an "Estimated Fetal Weight Sonogram" to determine the baby's size and position. Some insurance companies will only cover a certain number of sonograms during pregnancy. Because of this, we recommend contacting your insurance to find out what your coverage entails.

Our office also offers a 45-60 minute 3D / 4D sonogram session. Unfortunately, because this is an elective procedure, insurance does not cover it. The cost is \$150. Please let your doctor or midwife know if you are interested in having this done, and they will provide you with more information at that time.

### **Where does your practice deliver?**

All of our doctors and midwives can deliver at OSF, Methodist, and Proctor hospitals.

### **Can I come to your practice if I'm planning a home birth?**

Our practice does not support home births because of the risks associated with them. If you are planning a home birth, we cannot assume the care of you and your baby throughout your prenatal course.

### **Can I have an epidural if I plan to deliver with the midwives?**

Yes, our midwives will continue to manage your labor and delivery even if you have an epidural.

### **What are my nutritional needs during pregnancy?**

We recommend a healthy, well balanced diet that contains proteins, carbohydrates, vegetables, fruits, dairy, vitamins, minerals, fats, and oils. On average, you only need 300 extra calories per day to fuel your baby's growth and keep your body healthy. This is the equivalent of a glass of skim milk and half a sandwich. Eating healthy snacks between meals is a good way to get the extra calories and added nutrients that you need.

### **How much weight should I gain?**

How much weight you should gain during pregnancy depends on how much you weighed before getting pregnant. Women of a normal weight prior to pregnancy should gain 25-35 pounds. Women who are underweight should gain 28-40 pounds, and women who are overweight should gain 15-20 pounds.

### **Are there any foods I need to avoid?**

Some foods should be avoided in pregnancy. Most of these foods should be avoided because of their potential for contamination with a bacteria called Listeria, which can lead to miscarriage,

pre-term birth, and / or flu-like symptoms. You should avoid unpasteurized dairy products, raw or undercooked eggs (eggs should be cooked until both the white and yolk are solid), liver and liver products, swordfish, marlin, shark, and raw or undercooked meat, fish, and poultry.

### **Is it safe to eat fish?**

Seafood can be a great source of protein, iron, and omega-3 fatty acids which are crucial nutrients for your baby's growth and development. You can safely eat up to 12 ounces per week of shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, catfish, pollock, tilapia, whitefish, haddock, calamari, and scallops. However, some types of seafood, particularly large, predatory fish such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel, and tilefish, can contain high levels of mercury and should be avoided.

### **Are diet drinks safe during pregnancy?**

Yes, but try not to drink more than one per day. If given a choice, use products that contain Aspartame or Sucralose (Splenda).

### **Is caffeine safe during pregnancy?**

In moderation, caffeine is safe to consume while you are pregnant. We recommend limiting your caffeine intake to 1-2 cups of coffee, tea, or other caffeinated beverages per day.

### **Is alcohol safe?**

No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy. This is to prevent Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

### **What if I had a few drinks before finding out I was pregnant?**

If you had a drink or two before you realized you were pregnant, don't panic. It's not likely to have caused your baby any harm. The most important thing from here on out is to focus on staying as healthy as you can and to abstain from any further alcohol intake for the rest of your pregnancy.

### **Is it safe to drink herbal tea?**

Like all things in pregnancy, moderation is key. Most commercially available herbal teas are safe to drink. Raspberry leaf tea is the foundation of almost all pregnancy teas as it helps promote uterine health during pregnancy. Chamomile is a great for reducing stress, promoting relaxation, and aiding in digestion and restful sleep. Peppermint tea helps to relieve flatulence and intestinal cramps, while Fresh Ginger tea is commonly used to relieve nausea associated with pregnancy. When choosing an herbal tea, it's best to avoid anything that contains "nutritional supplements" such as St. John's wort or ginseng.

### **What is Folic Acid?**

Folic Acid is a naturally occurring B vitamin that helps the baby's neural tube develop properly. The neural tube is a part of the baby that will develop into the brain and spinal cord. If the neural tube does not close properly, the baby can be born with a serious birth defect called a neural tube defect. You can help prevent this birth defect from occurring by taking 600-1,000 micrograms of Folic Acid daily during your pregnancy. Most prenatal vitamins contain the necessary amount of folic acid, and an additional supplement is usually not necessary. It's recommended that women take a multivitamin with at least 400 micrograms of folic acid three months prior to getting pregnant.

### **Should I take an Omega-3 supplement during pregnancy?**

In general, it's better if you can get your nutrients through food. But chances are you're not eating enough of the right fish to give you a significant dose of omega-3's, especially when you have to avoid fish high in mercury, which is the case during pregnancy. Because of this, supplements are an easy way to get a good dose of omega-3's. Most experts recommend pregnant women consume 200-300 milligrams of DHA daily to help promote your baby's brain and eye development. When choosing a DHA supplement, try to find a brand that contains some EPA as well. If you have a history of bleeding or clotting disorders, you should not take an omega-3 supplement.

### **What can I do to help with nausea and vomiting?**

Due to hormonal changes during the first three months of pregnancy, nausea and vomiting can be very common. These symptoms are typically worse when the stomach is empty, so try eating a few crackers in the morning before getting out of bed. We also recommend eating small frequent bland meals (at least every 1 1/2 - 2 hours) throughout the day to keep something in your stomach and to stabilize your blood sugar. Dehydration can also make symptoms more pronounced, so make sure you are drinking plenty of fluids, such as water, ginger tea, ginger ale, or lemonade. You can also try taking vitamin B6 25mg in the morning and in the evening, and a 1/2 tablet of Unisom in the morning and in the evening. Some other remedies include: lemon drops, mints, ginger chews, preggie pops, and motion sickness bands.

### **What if my prenatal vitamin is making me sick?**

First, try taking it at night before bed. If this doesn't help, you can take two Flintstones Vitamins daily in place of your prenatal vitamin.

### **Should I get a flu shot?**

The flu shot can be safely given during any trimester of pregnancy and is highly recommended by our physicians and nurse midwives for all pregnant and breastfeeding mothers. For more information regarding the importance of getting a flu shot during pregnancy, please click on the following link: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm>

### **Can I travel during pregnancy?**

As long as your pregnancy remains uncomplicated, it is safe to travel until 34 weeks gestation. After 34 weeks, we don't recommend that you travel further than one hour away. While traveling, you should get up and move around for at least 10 minutes every 1-2 hours. This is to promote adequate blood flow through your body and prevent blood clots from forming. Make sure to mention any upcoming travel plans at your next visit, as the doctor or midwife may recommend taking a copy of your prenatal record with you.

### **Can I go to the dentist while pregnant?**

Yes, we recommend that you continue with routine dental visits during your pregnancy. Make sure the dentist is aware of the pregnancy and that your abdomen and thyroid are covered during any x-rays that may need to be done. If it is necessary to have dental work done while pregnant, you can have local anesthesia, but no nitrous oxide should be used. Some dentists require written guidelines for treatment from our office. If your dentist requires this type of note, please call our office with their fax number and we will be happy to send it to them.

### **What can I do to prevent stretch marks?**

Whether or not you get stretch marks primarily depends on your genetic makeup and how rapidly you gain weight. The best defense against stretch marks is to drink plenty of water and eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, vitamins, and minerals in order to keep your skin healthy and well hydrated. Creams and lotions cannot change your genes, but they can help with the itching and burning that accompanies your rapidly growing abdomen.

### **What is Toxoplasmosis?**

Toxoplasmosis is an infection caused by the parasite toxoplasma gondii, which can threaten the health of an unborn baby. The most common ways to become infected with toxoplasmosis are by handling cat feces, eating undercooked or raw meat, or by eating uncooked foods that have come into contact with contaminated meats. In order to prevent toxoplasmosis, make sure you thoroughly cook all meat (meat should not look pink and juices should be clear), wash all fruits and vegetables before eating, use hot soapy water to wash any surface that has come into contact with raw meats, and avoid changing cat litter. If changing cat litter is unavoidable, wear gloves and wash your hands with hot soapy water when finished.

### **Can I get my hair colored or permed?**

After your 1st trimester, it is safe to color and / or perm your hair. However, due to the hormonal changes that are going on in your body, your hair may not react to the color or perm like it did before the pregnancy.

### **When should I start to feel my baby move?**

Most first time moms will start feeling their baby move around 16-20 weeks. If this isn't your first pregnancy, you may feel movement earlier than 16 weeks. Most women describe the initial sensations of movement as being like popcorn popping or like butterflies in their stomach. By 28 weeks you'll be able to discern a pattern to your baby's movements and you'll know if he or she isn't moving as much as normal. You should call the office ASAP if you notice a decrease in your baby's movements.

### **What does ligament pain feel like?**

Round ligament pain is very normal in pregnancy. It's a sharp pain on either side of the lower abdomen that can occur with movement such as getting up from a chair, urinating, or turning from side to side in bed. Though sharp, the pain goes away quickly. Try supporting your abdomen when standing up or turning in bed to prevent the ligaments from being over stretched.

### **Is it safe to continue having intercourse?**

As long as your pregnancy remains uncomplicated, it is safe to continue having intercourse. If you've had any spotting, bleeding, or problems with pre-term labor, you should abstain from intercourse until your doctor or midwife advises otherwise. You should not have intercourse once your water has broken.

### **How can I tell if I've lost my mucus plug?**

The mucus plug is a small amount of thickened mucus that seals your cervical canal and prevents bacteria from entering the uterus. As your cervix begins to ripen and dilate, the mucus plug is expelled. It may be clear, slightly pink or blood tinged in color, and may be stringy or sticky in consistency. Some women may not even notice the loss of their mucus plug because of the increased discharge already associated with pregnancy. Passing your mucus plug is a sign that your body is preparing for labor, but does not mean labor is imminent. Labor could be hours, days, and even weeks away as the cervix gradually opens over time.

### **Can I exercise during pregnancy?**

There are many great reasons to continue an exercise program after becoming pregnant. Exercise will help you to sleep better, reduce pregnancy discomforts, help prepare your body for childbirth, reduce stress levels, lift your spirits, and will help to get your body back in shape after delivery. Low impact or prenatal aerobic exercise classes, as well as walking and swimming are recommended. When working out, always remember to drink plenty of water and never lie flat on your back during any exercises.

### **Can I sit in a Jacuzzi or hot tub?**

We do not recommend using a Jacuzzi or hot tub during pregnancy. This is because they can elevate your body temperature to a level that is unsafe for both you and the baby. A good rule of thumb is anything over 100 degrees Fahrenheit is too hot to be in while pregnant.

### **Is it safe to paint?**

Latex paints that do not contain solvents such as ethylene glycol ethers and biocides are safe to be around during pregnancy. If you are painting indoors, make sure the area is well ventilated. You should avoid all oil based paints and varnishing products.

### **What can I do to for leg cramps?**

Consuming 1,000-1,500mg of Calcium daily, along with a potassium rich snack such as a banana or glass of orange juice before bed should keep cramps at bay. You can also try gentle calf stretches before getting into bed to help loosen your muscles.