

## Safety During Pregnancy

### **DO THESE:**

#### When Riding in the Car

- Always wear your seat belt – both the lap belt, low on your abdomen, and the shoulder harness.
- On long car trips, try to stop every hour and take a short walk to enhance circulation.

#### Dental Health

- Make sure your dentist and hygienist know you are pregnant.
- Visit your dentist early in your pregnancy. Gum tenderness and swelling are common in pregnancy due to increase blood volume and circulation. Mothers with chronic gum disease may be at risk for preterm or low birth weight infants.

#### Exercise

- In most cases, it is safe to stay at the activity level that your body is used to. Low impact exercise is recommended later in your pregnancy.
- Swimming and walking are always good choices in a normal, healthy pregnancy. Don't exercise to the point of being out of breath. You should be able to have a conversation while exercising.
- Be sure to drink plenty of water before and after you exercise.
- Wear proper clothing, and don't get too hot.
- You may want to do Kegel exercises, which strengthen the pelvic muscles. You can learn to do these when you are urinating. After starting to urinate, stop the flow by contracting those muscles hard. Hold as long as you can, then release and tighten again for as long as you can. After you have learned which muscles to tighten and release, do Kegel exercises several times a day.

#### Sexuality

- You may notice increased or decreased desire for sexual activity during pregnancy.
- Some women become less interested in sex during the third trimester.
- Intercourse throughout pregnancy is safe. If your pregnancy is high-risk, talk with your doctor.

- It is OK to have an orgasm during pregnancy, as long as your pregnancy is not high-risk. An orgasm may feel like a contraction.
- Avoid sexual activities that involve air being blown into the vagina or vigorous rear-entry intercourse. These activities may push air into the vagina, which could cause an air bubble to enter your circulatory system; this can be dangerous.

## **AVOID THESE:**

### Alcohol

- Alcohol passes through the placenta to the baby.
- A mother who drinks alcohol is at risk for having a baby with fetal alcohol syndrome, or fetal alcohol effects, which may include mental retardation.
- Pregnancy is the time to stop drinking alcohol.

### Cigarettes

- Smoking cigarettes constricts your blood vessels, including those in the placenta. This decreases the oxygen, fluid, and nutrients passed by the placenta to your unborn baby.
- Babies whose mother smoked during pregnancy are smaller, and are more likely to be premature and to have birth defects and learning disabilities after the birth than babies whose mothers stopped smoking during pregnancy.
- Babies and children who are exposed to cigarette smoke are more likely to have asthma and respiratory infections.
- Stop smoking during pregnancy.

### Douching

- Avoid douching at all times, as it can change the pH (acid/alkaline) balance of the vagina, making you more prone to vaginal infections.

### Drugs and Medicines

- Discuss all over the counter and prescribed drugs with your doctor before you take them.
- Illegal drugs pass through the placenta to the baby and cause many problems, such as smaller babies and premature birth.

### Hot Tubs

- Avoid water above 100°F throughout pregnancy, especially in the first three months. Hot tubs and saunas could increase your body temperature and cause problems with cell division, increasing the risk of birth defects or miscarriage.