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State Government Victoria | Better Health Channel Logo
Care

Health.vic
Victoria's hub for health services and business

DHHS
A gateway to the strategies, policies, programs and services delivered by the Department of Health & Human Services.

Seniors Online
Victorian government portal for older people, with information about government and community services and programs.

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Navigation
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  Conditions and treatments
  - Allergies
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  - Anxiety
  - Arthritis
  - Autism
  - Behavioral conditions
  - Birth defects
  - Blood and blood vessels
  - Bones and muscles and joints
    - Bone care - podiatrists
  - Brain and nerves
  - Cancer
  - Complementary and alternative care
  - Dementia

- Healthy living
  Healthy living
  - Alcohol
  - Babies and toddlers (0-3)
  - Children (4-12)
  - Drugs and addictive behaviours
  - Environmental health
  - Family Violence
Pregnancy and diet
Summary

- A pregnant woman needs to boost her nutrient intake, rather than her kilojoule intake.
- Pregnancy creates extra demands for certain nutrients, including iron and folate.
- Good food hygiene is particularly important during pregnancy to avoid listeria infection and salmonella risk.

Good nutrition during pregnancy can help to keep you and your developing baby healthy. The need for certain nutrients, such as iron, iodine and folate, is increased at this time.

Healthy weight gain during pregnancy

Steady weight gain during pregnancy is normal and important for the health of the mother and baby. However, it is also important not to gain too much weight.

If you are pregnant, a good approach is to eat to satisfy your appetite and continue to monitor your weight. For women who are a healthy weight, it is recommended that you gain between 11.5 and 16 kg. Underweight women may need to gain more weight (between 12.5 and 18 kg).

If you are overweight, pregnancy is not the time to start dieting or trying to lose weight. However, it is recommended for women who are overweight to gain less weight during pregnancy (between 5 and 11.5 kg).

To maintain appropriate weight gain during pregnancy, it is important to choose healthy foods from the five food groups, and limit discretionary foods and drinks high in saturated fat, added sugars and added salt, such as cakes, biscuits and sugary drinks.

Healthy eating for pregnant women

It is important to choose a wide variety of healthy foods to make sure that the nutritional needs of both mother and baby are met.

You can eat well during pregnancy by:

- enjoying a variety of fruits and vegetables of different types and colours
- increasing your intake of grain and cereal foods to 8-8 ½ serves a day. Choose mostly wholegrain and high fibre options
- choosing foods that are high in iron, such as lean red meat or tofu. Iron-rich foods are important for pregnant women
- making a habit of drinking milk, and eating hard cheese and yoghurt, or calcium-enriched alternatives. Reduced-fat varieties are best
- drinking plenty of water (fluid needs are about 750 to 1,000 ml extra per day)

Foods and drinks that are high in saturated fat, added sugar and salt are not a necessary part of a healthy diet and should be limited.

The table below outlines the number of serves of foods from each food group that pregnant women need to make sure they have enough energy and nutrients for themselves and for the growing baby.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food group</th>
<th>Serves required during pregnancy</th>
<th>Examples of one standard serve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables and legumes/beans</td>
<td>18 years or under: 5</td>
<td>½ cup cooked vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19-50 years: 5</td>
<td>½ cup cooked or canned* beans, peas or lentils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 cup green leafy or raw salad vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>½ cup sweet corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>½ medium potato or other starchy vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 medium tomato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>18 years or under: 2</td>
<td>1 medium fruit, such as apple, banana, orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19-50 years: 2</td>
<td>2 small fruits, such as apricots, kiwi fruits or plums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 cup diced or canned fruit (no added sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Or only occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>125ml (½ cup) fruit juice (no added sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30g dried fruit (such as 4 apricot halves, ½ tablespoons sultanas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain and/or high-fibre varieties</td>
<td>18 years or under: 8</td>
<td>1 slice bread, ½ medium roll or flat bread (40 g)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19-50 years: 8 ½</td>
<td>½ cup cooked rice, pasta, noodles, barley, buckwheat, semolina, polenta, burghul or quinoa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds and legumes/beans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Servings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 years or under: 3 ½</td>
<td>65 g cooked lean meats, such as beef, lamb, veal, pork, goat or kangaroo (90-100 g raw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years: 3 ½</td>
<td>80 g cooked lean poultry, such as chicken, turkey (100 g raw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years: 3 ½</td>
<td>100 g cooked fish fillet (115 g raw) or one small can of fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years: 3 ½</td>
<td>2 large eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years: 3 ½</td>
<td>1 cup cooked or canned* legumes/beans, such as lentils, chickpeas or split peas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years: 3 ½</td>
<td>170 g tofu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years: 3 ½</td>
<td>30 g nuts or seeds, nut/seed paste*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Milk, yoghurt, cheese and/or alternatives, mostly reduced fat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Servings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 years or under: 3 ½</td>
<td>1 cup (250 ml) fresh, UHT long life, reconstituted powdered milk or buttermilk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years: 2 ½</td>
<td>½ cup (120 ml) evaporated milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years: 2 ½</td>
<td>2 slices (40 g) hard cheese, such as cheddar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years: 2 ½</td>
<td>½ cup (200 g) yoghurt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50 years: 2 ½</td>
<td>1 cup (250 ml) soy, rice or other cereal drink, with at least 100 mg of added calcium per 100 ml</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Canned foods should preferably be with no added salt.

No need to eat for two

During pregnancy, both you and your growing baby need extra nutrients, so eating healthy foods from the five food groups is important. During the first trimester, a woman’s energy (kilojoule, kJ) intake should remain about the same as it was prior to the pregnancy, which means that extra food is not required.

During the second and third trimester, the energy needs of pregnant women increase. To meet energy and nutrient needs during this time, pregnant women are recommended to increase their intake of grain foods (an extra 2 ½ serves per day), and lean meats and alternatives (one extra serve per day).

Some suggestions to help you meet these additional energy needs include:

- a wholegrain sandwich with fillings such as roast beef, hard-boiled egg, tinned fish (see recommendations about fish below), hummus
- a small bowl of pasta with meat or bean sauce
- a small bowl of stir-fried rice with tofu.

Folic acid (folate) and pregnancy

Folate (known as folic acid when added to foods) is a B-group vitamin found in a variety of foods. Folic acid helps protect against neural tube defects in the developing foetus, so it is important for pregnant women to make sure that they are receiving enough of this important vitamin.

For women who are planning a pregnancy, and during the first three months of pregnancy, a daily folic acid supplement that contains at least 400 micrograms of folic acid is recommended, as well as eating foods that are naturally rich in folate or are fortified with folic acid.

In Australia, all wheat flour used in breadmaking must contain folate (with the exception of flour used in ‘organic’ bread). Three slices of fortified bread (100 g) contains an average of 120 micrograms of folic acid. Breakfast cereals and fruit juices sold in Australia may also have folic acid added.

Folate in your diet

Excellent food sources of folate include:

- asparagus
- bran flakes
- broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- chickpeas
- dried beans
- lentils
- spinach

Very good food sources of folate include:

- cabbage
- cauliflower
- leeks
- oranges
- orange juice
- parsley
- peas
- wheat germ
- wholegrain bread.

Good food sources of folate include:

- hazelnuts
- vegemite
- parsnips
- potato
- salmon
- strawberries

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Although liver is high in folate, it is not recommended for women who are, or could be pregnant, because of its high vitamin A content.

**Iron and pregnancy**

During pregnancy, a woman’s requirement for iron increases. This is because the developing foetus draws iron from the mother to last it through the first five or six months after birth.

Iron losses are reduced during pregnancy, because the woman is no longer menstruating. However, this is not enough to offset the needs of the developing foetus. It is important for women to eat iron-rich foods every day, such as meat, chicken, seafood, dried beans and lentils, and green leafy vegetables.

Animal sources of iron are readily absorbed by the body. Iron from plant sources is not absorbed as easily, but absorption is helped when these foods are eaten together with foods that contain vitamin C (such as oranges). This is important for women who follow a vegetarian diet.

The recommended daily intake (RDI) of iron during pregnancy is 27 mg a day (9 mg a day more than for non-pregnant women). Iron deficiency during pregnancy is common in Australia, and iron supplements may be needed by some women. It is important to discuss your need for supplements with your doctor, as iron can be toxic (poisonous) in large amounts.

**Iodine and pregnancy**

Iodine is an important mineral needed for the production of thyroid hormone, which is important for growth and development. Inadequate iodine intake during pregnancy increases the risk of mental impairment and cretinism in the newborn baby.

Foods that are good sources of iodine include seafood and seaweed (including nori and kelp), eggs, meat and dairy products. Iodised salt also includes iodine. It is important to avoid adding salt at the table or in cooking, but if you do, make sure it is labelled iodised.

Due to the re-emergence of iodine deficiency in Australia, iodised salt is now added to all commercially sold bread in Australia and New Zealand, with the exception of organic and unleavened bread.

Pregnant and breastfeeding women have increased iodine requirements. Iodine supplementation of 150 micrograms per day is recommended for women planning a pregnancy, throughout pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

**Vitamin A and pregnancy**

Although vitamin A requirements do increase during pregnancy, vitamin A supplements are rarely recommended for pregnant women. This is because an excessive intake of vitamin A may cause birth deformities.

The best way to make sure that you are getting enough vitamin A is through food sources like milk, fish, eggs and margarine.

**Multivitamin supplements and pregnancy**

Multivitamin supplements may be recommended for some groups of pregnant women, including:

- vegans and vegetarians
- teenagers who may have an inadequate food intake
- substance misusers (of drugs, tobacco and alcohol)
- pregnant women who are already very overweight and who are trying to prevent excessive weight gains.

Always be advised by your doctor before taking vitamin or mineral supplements.

**No need for extra calcium during pregnancy**

Until 2006, Australian dietary recommendations advised increased calcium intake during pregnancy and breastfeeding. This advice has since been revised. Although the baby has a high requirement for calcium during the third trimester of pregnancy, (as it starts to develop and strengthen its bones), the mother’s increased capacity to absorb dietary calcium means that there is no need for extra intake.

The recommended dietary intake for non-pregnant women (1,000 mg a day for women aged 19 to 50 years and 1,300 mg a day for adolescents or those aged over 51) remains unchanged during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Dairy foods (such as milk, cheese and yoghurt) and calcium-fortified soy milk are excellent dietary sources of calcium.

**The dangers of dieting while pregnant**

Some women fear the extra weight gain of pregnancy and may decide to eat sparingly to avoid putting on body fat. Restricted eating or crash dieting in any form while pregnant can seriously compromise your health and that of your baby, and is not recommended during pregnancy.

**Pregnancy in adolescence**

Pregnant adolescents need more of some nutrients than adult women, because they are still growing themselves. Adolescents may give birth to smaller infants, because they are competing with the growing foetus for nutrients.

It is important for pregnant adolescents to make sure they are getting enough iron. Calcium intake is also important, because young women have not yet reached their peak bone mass, and inadequate calcium intake may increase the risk of osteoporosis developing later in life.
Pregnant adolescents should eat around 3 ½ serves of milk, yoghurt, cheese or calcium-fortified alternatives each day to make sure they are meeting their calcium needs.

**Constipation during pregnancy**

Constipation is a common occurrence during pregnancy. To help with constipation, enjoy a wide variety of foods that are high in fibre, such as vegetables, legumes, fruit and wholegrains and drink plenty of water.

**Nausea and vomiting during pregnancy**

Nausea and vomiting, especially ‘morning sickness’, are common during pregnancy, particularly in the first trimester.

Some suggestions that may also help include:

- Eat some dry bread, biscuits or cereal before getting up in the morning. Get up slowly, avoiding sudden movements.
- Drink liquids between rather than with meals to avoid bloating, as this can trigger vomiting.
- Avoid large meals and greasy, highly spiced foods.
- Suck on something sour like a lemon.
- Relax, rest and get into the fresh air as much as possible. Keep rooms well ventilated and odour free.
- Try food and drinks containing ginger, such as ginger tea, as these sometimes relieve nausea.

**Heartburn and pregnancy**

Heartburn is common in pregnancy because, as the baby grows, there is more pressure on the abdomen. Small, frequent meals may help, compared to larger meals.

Try to avoid:

- eating late at night
- bending, lifting or lying down after meals
- excessive consumption of tea or coffee.

You may also like to try sleeping with your bedhead raised a few inches. You can do this by putting a folded blanket or pillow under your mattress.

**Alcohol during pregnancy**

There is no known safe level of alcohol consumption for women who are pregnant. Consuming alcohol during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage, low birth weight, congenital deformities and effects on the baby’s intelligence.

The Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol recommend that the safest option for pregnant women is not to drink alcohol at all.

If you find it difficult to decrease or stop drinking alcohol during pregnancy talk to:

- your doctor or midwife
- your local community health service
- an alcohol or other drug helpline in your state or territory.

The [Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol](https://www.grha.org.au/assets/health-guidelines/alcohol.html) provide more information.

**Listeria infection and pregnancy**

Listeria infection, or listeriosis, is an illness usually caused by eating food contaminated with bacteria known as *Listeria monocytogenes*. Healthy people may experience no ill-effects from listeria infection at all, but the risks are substantial for pregnant women. The greatest danger is to the unborn baby, with increased risk of miscarriage, stillbirth or premature labour. A listeria infection is easily treated with antibiotics, but prevention is best.

Some foods are more prone to contamination with listeria than others and should be avoided if you are pregnant. They include:

- soft cheeses, such as brie, camembert and ricotta – these are safe if served cooked and hot
- precooked or pre-prepared cold foods that will not be reheated – for example, pre-prepared salads, pate, quiches and delicatessen meats like ham and salami
- undercooked meat, chilled pre-cooked meats, pate, meat spread
- raw seafood, such as oysters and sashimi or smoked seafood, such as salmon (canned varieties are safe)
- unpasteurised foods
- pre-prepared or pre-packaged cut fruit and vegetables
- soft-serve ice cream.

The organism that causes listeria infection is destroyed by heat, so properly cooked foods are not a risk.

**Salmonella and pregnancy**

Salmonella is a cause of food poisoning that can trigger miscarriage. The most likely sources of salmonella are raw eggs and undercooked meat and poultry.

**Good food hygiene**

Good [food hygiene](https://www.grha.org.au/assets/health-guidelines/food-handling.html) is the best way to reduce the risk of salmonella and listeria infections. Suggestions include:

- Always wash your hands before and after preparing food.
- Keep your kitchen surfaces clean.
- Do not let uncooked food contaminate cooked food.

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• Wash fruit, vegetables and salad before eating.
• Cook food thoroughly.
• Keep pets away from kitchen surfaces.
• Wear rubber gloves when handling cat litter trays or gardening.
• Store food at correct temperatures.

Mercury in fish

It is suggested that pregnant women eat two to three serves of fish every week for the good health of themselves and their developing baby. However, pregnant women or women intending to become pregnant within the next six months should be careful about which fish they eat. Some types of fish contain high levels of mercury, which can be harmful to the developing foetus.

When choosing fish, pregnant women should:

• **limit to one serve (150 g) per fortnight** – billfish (swordfish, broadbill and marlin) and shark (flake), with no other fish eaten in that fortnight

  OR

• **limit to one serve (150 g) per week** – orange roughy (deep sea perch) or catfish, with no other fish eaten that week

  OR

• **eat two to three serves per week** – of any other fish or seafood (for example, salmon or tuna).

Note: 150 g is equivalent to approximately two frozen crumbed fish portions.

Women should not be worried if they’ve had the odd meal of fish with high levels of mercury. It is only a potential problem when that type of fish is eaten regularly, which causes a build-up of mercury in the mother’s blood.

Where to get help

• Your GP (doctor)
• Midwife
• Obstetrician
• Dietitians Association of Australia Tel. 1800 812 942

References

• Mercury in fish, 2011, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ). More information here.
• Why you need folic acid, Baby Center. More information here.
• Food and nutrition in pregnancy, The Royal Women’s Hospital. More information here.
• Listeria – the facts, Infectious Diseases Epidemiology and Surveillance, Disease Control and Research Branch, Health Department, Victoria, Australia. More information here.
• Pregnancy, Dietitians Association of Australia. More information here.
• Pregnancy and healthy eating, Food Standards Australia New Zealand. More information here.
• Nutrient reference values for Australia and New Zealand including recommended dietary intakes, National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Government. More information here.

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More information

Healthy pregnancy

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Pregnancy and birth basics
- Stages of pregnancy
- Fertility issues and options
- Keeping healthy during pregnancy
- Health concerns during pregnancy
- Preparing for birth
- Preparing for a newborn

Pregnancy and birth basics

- Childbirth - pain relief options

  Understanding your pain relief options can help you cope better with the pain of childbirth...

- Pregnancy - labour

  Labour is divided into three stages. The first stage is dilation of the cervix from 0 to 10 cm, the second stage is birth of the baby, and the third stage is delivery of the placenta. Labour typically...

- Pregnancy - premature labour

  Sometimes, babies arrive early. It’s important to recognise premature labour, in case you and your baby need medical care...

- Contraception after giving birth

  After having a baby, you need to choose an effective method of contraception if you don't want to have another baby straight away...
If you want to get pregnant, timing is everything

If you are trying for a baby, to increase your chances of conceiving, it helps to know when you are at your most fertile, and when is the best time to have sex.

Pregnancy testing
Sometimes, a home pregnancy test may be positive when a woman isn’t pregnant.

Pregnancy - unplanned
When a woman does not want to become a parent, her pregnancy options may include abortion or adoption.

Contraception - emergency contraception
It is best to take emergency contraception as soon as possible, ideally within 24 hours of having unprotected sex, but it still works well within 96 hours (four days).

Stages of pregnancy

Baby due date
Pregnancy is calculated from the first day of your last period, not from the date of conception.

Pregnancy - week by week
Pregnancy is counted as 40 weeks, starting from the first day of the mother's last menstrual period.

Pregnancy - signs and symptoms
All women experience pregnancy differently, and you will experience different symptoms at different stages of your pregnancy.

Planning for labour and birth
Some of the signs and symptoms of going into labour may include period-like cramps, backache, diarrhoea and contractions.

Conceiving a baby
The odds of a young fertile couple conceiving by having sexual intercourse around the time of ovulation (the release of the egg from the ovary) are approximately one in five every month. Around nine...

Pregnancy stages and changes
It’s helpful to have an idea of how your body may react to the different stages of pregnancy. It also helps to know how pregnancy may affect your emotions and feelings.

Fertility issues and options

Adoption
Adoption can give a secure family life to children who can't live with their birth family.

Surrogacy
Surrogacy is a form of assisted reproductive treatment (ART) in which a woman carries a child within her uterus on behalf of another person or couple.

If you want to get pregnant, timing is everything

If you are trying for a baby, to increase your chances of conceiving, it helps to know when you are at your most fertile, and when is the best time to have sex.

Abortion
All women should have access to accurate information about abortion so they can make their own informed decisions.

Age and fertility
Age affects the fertility of both men and women, and is the single biggest factor affecting a woman’s chance to conceive and have a healthy baby.

Infertility in men
A couple isn't suspected of fertility problems until they have tried and failed to conceive for one year.

Infertility in women
The odds of a young fertile couple conceiving by having sexual intercourse around the time of ovulation are approximately one in five every month.

Weight, fertility and pregnancy health
Compared with women in the healthy weight range, women who are carrying extra weight are less likely to conceive.

Keeping healthy during pregnancy

Pregnancy - morning sickness
Morning sickness is typically at its worst early in the day but it can strike at any point during the day or night.

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- Postnatal exercise - sample workout
  Make sure your abdominal muscles have healed before you do any vigorous tummy exercises, such as crunches.

- Healthy eating during pregnancy - tucker talk tips
  Some foods should be avoided during pregnancy as they carry bacteria that could harm your unborn baby.

- Postnatal exercise
  Always consult with your doctor or midwife before starting any postnatal exercise program.

- Pregnancy and your mental health
  Finding out you are pregnant can be a very exciting time. But it can also make you feel uncomfortable, unwell, worried and make you wonder how you are going to cope. And it doesn’t stop when the baby...

- Pregnancy and teeth
  It's important to look after your teeth and gums when you're pregnant, as gum disease can affect your baby.

- Tests, scans and checks - pregnancy and labour
  Tests can confirm your pregnancy and also monitor your baby's development in the womb.

- Alcohol and pregnancy
  There’s no safe level of alcohol use during pregnancy. It’s safest to not drink at all during pregnancy, when trying to conceive, and while breastfeeding.

- Immunisation and pregnancy
  Immunisation can protect a woman and her unborn baby against many infectious diseases.

- Pregnancy and smoking
  Smoking while pregnant exposes a woman and her unborn child to an increased risk of health problems.

- Pregnancy and exercise
  Unless you have complications, you should be able to exercise throughout your pregnancy.

- Pelvic floor
  Pelvic floor exercises are designed to improve muscle tone and prevent the need for corrective surgery.

- Pregnancy and diet
  Good nutrition during pregnancy can help to keep you and your developing baby healthy.

- Pregnancy and travel
  Travelling to developing nations is not encouraged during pregnancy, due to the risk of disease and the standard of medical facilities.

- Food poisoning - listeria
  Listeria infection is uncommon but very dangerous for the elderly, people whose immune systems are not working properly and pregnant women and their unborn babies.

Health concerns during pregnancy

- Miscarriage and Stillbirth - Coming to terms (video)

- Pregnancy - bleeding problems
  Bleeding from the vagina in early pregnancy happens in almost one in four pregnancies.

- New born bloodspot screening (video)
  Every newborn baby in Australia is offered a newborn bloodspot screening test to identify those at risk for rare, but serious, medical conditions including PKU, hypothyroidism and cystic fibrosis.

- Placenta previa
  Placenta previa means the placenta has implanted at the bottom of the uterus, over the cervix or close by.

- Placental abruption
  Placental abruption means the placenta has detached from the wall of the uterus, starving the baby of oxygen and nutrients.

- Pregnancy - pre-eclampsia
  There is no evidence that pre-eclampsia is caused by emotional stress, working too hard or not getting enough rest.

- Lupus and pregnancy
Lupus can be controlled with medications, so the majority of affected women are able to have children.

- **HIV and women – having children**
  Women living with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), or women whose partner is HIV-positive, may wish to have children but feel concerned about the risk of transmission of the virus to themselves or their partner.

- **Alcohol and pregnancy**
  There’s no safe level of alcohol use during pregnancy. It’s safest to not drink at all during pregnancy, when trying to conceive, and while breastfeeding.

- **Smoking and pregnancy**
  Smoking while pregnant exposes a woman and her unborn child to an increased risk of health problems.

- **Ectopic pregnancy**
  Ectopic pregnancy is caused by a fertilised egg not being able to move through the fallopian tube.

- **Obstetric emergencies**
  An obstetric emergency may arise when a woman is pregnant, or during her delivery. In this case, extra care is needed. A woman may need a lot of tests and treatments, and extended hospital stays. She...

- **Postnatal depression (PND)**
  Postnatal depression can happen either a few days or weeks after the birth, with a slow or sudden onset.

- **Molar pregnancy**
  Most molar pregnancies are diagnosed when bleeding early in pregnancy prompts an ultrasound scan.

- **Miscarriage**
  A range of feelings is normal after a miscarriage, and they often linger for some time.

- **Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)**
  The World Health Organization recommends that pregnant women should avoid alcohol.

- **Diabetes - gestational**
  Gestational diabetes is diabetes that occurs during pregnancy and usually disappears when the pregnancy is over.

- **Asthma - pregnancy and breastfeeding**
  Pregnant women with asthma need to continue to take their asthma medication as it is important to the health of both mother and baby that the mother’s asthma is well managed.

- **Pregnancy and diet**
  Good nutrition during pregnancy can help to keep you and your developing baby healthy.

- **Birth defects explained**
  The cause of birth defects is often unknown, speak to your GP if you are at increased risk of having a baby with a congenital anomaly.

### Preparing for birth

- **Pregnancy - care choices**
  It’s very important for you and your baby to be looked after from the start of your pregnancy until after the birth of your baby.

- **Pregnancy - labour**
  Labour is divided into three stages. The first stage is dilation of the cervix from 0 to 10 cm, the second stage is birth of the baby, and the third stage is delivery of the placenta. Labour typically...

- **Pregnancy - premature labour**
  Sometimes, babies arrive early. It’s important to recognise premature labour, in case you and your baby need medical care.

- **Packing for hospital**
  Packing for hospital is an exciting part of preparing for the birth of your baby.

- **Planning for labour and birth**
  Some of the signs and symptoms of going into labour may include period-like cramps, backache, diarrhoea and contractions.

- **Twins - identical and fraternal**
  Multiples births are more common due to the advancing average age of mothers and the rise in assisted reproductive techniques.
Preparing for a newborn

- Breastfeeding - the first days
  Let your baby feed as much as they want in the first few days to help establish good breastfeeding patterns.

- Breastfeeding - when to start
  Breastfeeding within the first hour after birth allows your baby to behave instinctively and breastfeed with little intervention.

- Vitamin K and newborn babies
  With low levels of vitamin K, some babies can have severe bleeding into the brain, causing significant brain damage.

- Alcohol and pregnancy
  There’s no safe level of alcohol use during pregnancy. It’s safest to not drink at all during pregnancy, when trying to conceive, and while breastfeeding.

- Postnatal depression (PND)
  Postnatal depression can happen either a few days or weeks after the birth, with a slow or sudden onset.

- Baby furniture - safety tips
  Even if your baby furniture meets every safety standard and recommendation, your child still needs close supervision.

- Newborn bloodspot screening
  Every newborn baby in Australia is offered a newborn bloodspot screening test to identify those at risk of rare, but serious, medical conditions.

Related Information

- Pregnancy and smoking
  Smoking while pregnant exposes a woman and her unborn child to an increased risk of health problems.

- Healthy eating during pregnancy
  Some foods should be avoided during pregnancy as they carry bacteria that could harm your unborn baby.

- Food poisoning - listeria
  Listeria infection is uncommon but very dangerous for the elderly, people whose immune systems are not working properly and pregnant women and their unborn babies.

- Folate for pregnant women
  Even women who aren't planning to have a baby should increase their folate intake in case of unplanned pregnancy.

- Pregnancy and your mental health
  Finding out you are pregnant can be a very exciting time. But it can also make you feel uncomfortable, unwell, worried and make you wonder how you are going to cope. And it doesn’t stop when the baby.

Home

Related information on other websites

- Dietitians Association of Australia
- Food Standards Australia New Zealand.

Content Partner

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Deakin University - School of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences

Last updated: August 2014

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