

Ensuring a Healthy and Happy Pregnancy

Did you know that about half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned? That means every childbearing woman should be thinking about her health. Medical research shows that a mother's health during the nine months of pregnancy not only affects a baby's development in the womb, but also influences the child's health through adulthood. First 5 Shasta is working to ensure that babies are born healthy and ready for early development experiences that help them succeed in the world, in school and in life. It all starts with a healthy pregnancy.

Prenatal Care

- The first step to a healthy pregnancy is taking a prenatal vitamin every day. Prenatal supplements contain a host of vitamins to boost your health, including folic acid and iron, vitamin A, vitamin D, zinc and calcium which are important when you're pregnant.
- Folic Acid can help reduce the chances of neural tube defects by up to 70 percent. Start taking a prenatal vitamin or 400 micrograms of folic acid at least one month before you become pregnant.
- Foods like beans and legumes, citrus fruits and juices, whole grains, dark green leafy vegetables, poultry, pork, fish and shellfish all contain healthy amounts of folate in addition to your daily vitamin.
- Taking a vitamin is no substitute for a healthy diet. They are meant to supplement your diet, and aren't meant to be your only source of much-needed nutrients.

Eat Right, Not Twice

- Research suggests that women should only increase their caloric intake by 10 percent. In fact, you only need an additional 300 calories a day – that's about half a cup of nuts or two cups of milk.
- Make sure to eat healthy – lots of vegetables and fruit; protein from lean meats, eggs and nuts; and low-fat dairy products like cheese, yogurt and milk and steer clear of "empty calories," those calories that come from added sugars and solid fats.
- Because your growing baby's calcium demands are high, you should get 1,200 milligrams a day to prevent a loss from your own bones.
- Iron helps support your 50 percent increase in blood volume. Aim for 30 mg of iron every day from iron-rich foods such as red meat, salmon, eggs, tofu, dark poultry, enriched grains, beans and peas and dark leafy green vegetables.
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids boost your baby's brain development before birth. The National Institutes of Health recommend that pregnant and nursing women get at least 300 milligrams in their daily diet.
- Choose fish that are high in omega-3s but low in mercury, which can harm a fetus's nervous system. Avoid swordfish, shark, king mackerel, tilefish and, some experts now say, tuna. Top picks include wild Alaskan salmon, Atlantic mackerel, herring, sardines and anchovies. Fish oil supplements are also safe.



PATHWAY GOAL 1

Healthy, Well-Timed Births

Keep Fit

- Most experts recommend gaining about 25 to 35 pounds during pregnancy.
- Regular exercise during pregnancy can help prevent excess weight gain, improve sleep, boost your mood, improve circulation and lessen recovery time.
- Low-impact, moderate-intensity activities such as walking and swimming are great.
- Make sure to take frequent breaks and remember to drink plenty of fluids. Also remember that your center of gravity shifts as your pregnancy progresses.
- Talk to your doctor before beginning or continuing any exercise regimen. And use common sense — slow down or stop if you get short of breath or feel uncomfortable.
- Drinking enough water prevents dehydration which can lead to headaches, nausea, cramps, edema and can trigger preterm labor.
- Aim for 2.3 liters, or about 10 cups of water per day.

Know the "Don'ts"

- **Say no to alcohol.** Even as little as one drink a week has been linked in studies to behavioral problems in kids and can cause the more dangerous Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.
- **Quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.** According to the U.S. Surgeon General, smoking is the most preventable cause of poor pregnancy outcomes in the nation.
- **Smoking can cause miscarriages, bleeding, restricted growth, premature babies and other complications during pregnancy.** Plus, infants are three times more likely to die of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) when their mothers are smokers.
- **First 5 California sponsors the California Smokers' Helpline (1-800-NO-BUTTS) to provide smoking or tobacco using parents with free resources to quit.** Available in English, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean and Vietnamese.
- **Limit caffeine intake to less than 200 milligrams a day, about a 12-ounce cup of coffee.**

For more information on early learning and development, please visit www.first5shasta.org or www.first5california.com/parents.

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