



# Prenatal Care

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Prenatal care provides health care to you and your growing baby to help you both stay healthy during your pregnancy. Women who receive this type of care typically have fewer problems throughout their pregnancy, during labor and delivery, and postpartum. Unfortunately, **women who do not receive prenatal care are three times more likely to have a baby that is low birth weight and their baby is 5 times more likely to have complications at birth, including death.** To reduce the risk of these unpleasant outcomes occurring, it is important to regularly attend your prenatal visits to allow physicians to determine if the pregnancy presents any risks and, if so, address any complications that arise early on.



Before you begin your prenatal care, it is important that you find a physician that you are comfortable with so that you are free to discuss any questions or concerns that arise. When considering physicians, it may be beneficial to get a better understanding of what prenatal services are included in your health coverage and what physicians are within your network. If you do not have health insurance, you can apply for Medicaid coverage which would last throughout the entire duration of your pregnancy and two months following its end.

Usually during your first prenatal care visit, the doctor will confirm your pregnancy through means of an ultrasound or blood test, conduct a physical exam, conduct a pelvic exam and PAP, calculate your due date, and prescribe prenatal supplements and vitamins such as folic acid. It is important for you to follow along with your prescribed supplement regimen as folic acid lowers the risk of the baby developing a genetic defect. Following this initial visit, you will have continued prenatal appointments throughout your pregnancy.

Please let your doctor know if you have a substance abuse disorder. Specifically for more information on opioid abuse during pregnancy go to [www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/prescription-opioids-during-pregnancy.aspx](http://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/prescription-opioids-during-pregnancy.aspx).



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## **Taking Care of Yourself During Pregnancy:**

- Eat a well-balanced diet: Reduce your consumption of saturated fats. Consume vegetables, whole grains, and calcium rich foods
- Get in at least 2 and a half hours of aerobic exercise a week
- Ensure that you gain a healthy amount of weight. Your doctor can help you determine a target goal.
- Drink plenty of water
- Do not eat undercooked or uncooked meats or poultry
- Do not eat fish that have a high Mercury content including swordfish, king mackerel, shark and tilefish
- Do not smoke, do not do drugs and do not drink alcohol as consumption can lead to harm, birth defects, and death: If there is an addiction already established it is important to inform your physician to receive assistance to aid in quitting
- Learn how to effectively reduce stress
- Get an appropriate amount of sleep

## **Additional Resources:**

- Please visit <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/prenatal-care> to learn about additional lifestyle, diet, and other recommendations to support your prenatal care.
- Visit [www.newmibridges.michigan.gov](http://www.newmibridges.michigan.gov) to apply for Medicaid and Maternity Outpatient Medical Services (MOMS).
- March of Dimes: <https://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/prenatal-care.aspx>.