

## Sound Advice for a Healthy Pregnancy

So, you're having a baby! Once the shock of that news begins to wear off, it's important to think about your lifestyle and health habits during pregnancy. Following these guidelines can help keep you and your developing child healthy in the months to come:



- Visit your doctor regularly throughout your pregnancy.
  - Don't take any medications without your doctor's OK. Both prescriptions and over-the-counter medications can cause birth defects.
  - Don't smoke. Mothers who smoke have an increased risk of delivering prematurely and having a child with significant health problems.
  - Don't drink alcohol. It can cause fetal alcohol syndrome, which causes birth defects.
  - Don't take illegal drugs. Doing so can cause birth defects and developmental delays in your child.
  - Avoid exposure to toxic substances and chemicals, such as cleaning solvents, lead, mercury, some insecticides, paint thinners, and paint removers.
- Eat a nutritious and balanced diet. You'll need extra protein, calcium, iron, and zinc. If you were at your ideal weight before you become pregnant, you need about 300 more calories from nutritious foods per day than you usually eat. If you were overweight or underweight before pregnancy, ask your health care provider how many extra calories a day you need.
  - Take 400 mcg of folic acid daily. Folic acid is a B vitamin that helps protect your unborn child from brain and spinal-cord birth defects.
  - Stay physically active unless your doctor suggests otherwise. Exercise can help you feel better, reduce discomfort and fatigue, and promote a faster recovery after delivery. Walking and swimming, in particular, are recommended. Avoid strenuous sports or activities in which you could fall, such as horseback riding, roller-skating, and downhill skiing.
  - Avoid saunas, steam baths, and hot tubs. High heat can harm your baby.



## When to call the doctor

The following symptoms could indicate a potential health problem. If they occur, call or see your doctor:

- Excessive vomiting or diarrhea.
- Swelling in your face, fingers, and feet.
- Bleeding or leaking of fluid from the vagina.
- Strong cramps.
- A headache, backache, or stomachache that doesn't go away.
- Blurred vision or spots in front of your eyes.
- Pain or burning when you urinate.
- Less movement by the baby than usual.

For more information:

[www.personaladvantage.com/pregnancy](http://www.personaladvantage.com/pregnancy)

# How much do you know about birth defects?

## January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month

Find out with this short quiz!

### 1. What percentage of U.S. infants are born with birth defects annually?

- a. 1 percent
- b. 3 percent
- c. 5 percent
- d. 10 percent

### 2. When is an unborn baby most at risk of developing abnormalities?

- a. First trimester
- b. Second trimester
- c. Last trimester
- d. All 9 months

### 3. Which of these is one of the most common birth defects?

- a. Down syndrome
- b. Heart abnormalities
- c. Spina bifida
- d. Sickle-cell anemia

### 4. Which of these maternal habits can be harmful to the fetus?

- a. Smoking
- b. Drinking alcohol
- c. Taking illegal drugs
- d. All of the above



**5. A woman who is pregnant or considering pregnancy should get a medical checkup. Which of these immunizations should be current before conception?**

- a. Tetanus
- b. Diphtheria-polio-tetanus
- c. Measles and rubella
- d. Flu

**6. Doctors advise women to take 400 mcg of folic acid daily before conception and during pregnancy. What will this prevent in the baby?**

- a. Respiratory distress
- b. Brain and spinal defects
- c. Blood disorders
- d. Learning disorders

**7. Pregnant women should avoid handling cat litter to decrease the risk of becoming infected with which of these?**

- a. Toxoplasmosis
- b. Streptococcus
- c. E. coli bacteria
- d. HIV

**8. Which of these kinds of medications can cause birth defects if taken when pregnant?**

- a. Prescription medications
- b. Over-the-counter medications
- c. Herbal remedies
- d. All of the above

**9. During prenatal care, a physician may conduct genetic screening tests for certain disorders. What does an amniocentesis test for?**

- a. Down syndrome
- b. Multiple sclerosis
- c. Cancer
- d. Attention deficit disorder

**10. Extra or missing chromosomes trigger genetic birth defects. What factor greatly increases the risk of an abnormal number of chromosomes in the fetus?**

- a. Age of the mother
- b. Father's nutritional deficiencies
- c. Mother's diet
- d. None of the above

**The answers**

- 1. B. Three percent.
- 2. A. The first trimester.
- 3. C. Spina bifida. The spine doesn't develop normally, resulting in paralysis.
- 4. D. All of the above. Smoking increases the risk of miscarriage or damage to developing fetal organs. Alcohol and illegal drugs can increase the risk of fetal abnormalities and miscarriage.
- 5. C. Measles and rubella. If a woman is not immune to rubella, infection during pregnancy can result in birth defects.
- 6. B. Brain and spinal defects. Taking folic-acid supplements reduces the risk by 50 percent.
- 7. A. Toxoplasmosis. This infection can be transmitted to humans via cat feces, seriously harming an unborn baby. Infection during pregnancy can seriously harm an unborn baby.
- 8. D. All of the above. Many prescription and over-the-counter medications aren't safe for pregnant women to take. An expectant mother should check with her doctor before taking any medication or supplement.
- 9. A. Down syndrome. Amniocentesis usually is done between the 13th and 15th week of pregnancy.
- 10. A. Age of the mother. Women 35 and older have a greater risk of having a child with chromosomal abnormalities, in particular trisomy 21, also known as Down Syndrome.



For more information:

[www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com)