

Follow these do's and don'ts to take care of yourself and the precious life growing inside you:

Health care do's and don'ts

- Get early and regular prenatal care. Whether this is your first pregnancy or third, health care is extremely important. Your doctor will check to make sure you and the baby are healthy at each visit. If there are any problems, early action will help you and the baby.
- Take a multivitamin or prenatal vitamin with 400 to 800 micrograms (400 to 800 mcg or 0.4 to 0.8 mg) of folic acid every day. Folic acid is most important in the early stages of pregnancy, but you should continue taking folic acid throughout pregnancy.
- Ask your doctor before stopping any medicines or starting any new medicines. Some medicines are not safe during pregnancy. Keep in mind that even over-the-counter medicines and herbal products may cause side effects or other problems. But not using medicines you need could also be harmful.
- Avoid x-rays. If you must have dental work or diagnostic tests, tell your dentist or doctor that you are pregnant so that extra care can be taken.
- Get a flu shot. Pregnant women can get very sick from the flu and may need hospital care.

Food do's and don'ts

- [Eat a variety of healthy foods](#). Choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains, calcium-rich foods, and foods low in saturated fat. Also, make sure to drink plenty of fluids, especially water.
- Get all the nutrients you need each day, including iron. Getting enough iron prevents you from getting anemia, which is linked to [preterm birth](#) and [low birth weight](#). Eating a variety of healthy foods will help you get the nutrients your baby needs. But ask your doctor if you need to take a daily prenatal vitamin or iron supplement to be sure you are getting enough.
- Protect yourself and your baby from food-borne illnesses, including [toxoplasmosis](#) (TOK-soh-plaz-MOH-suhss) and [listeria](#) (lih-STEER-ee-uh). Wash fruits and vegetables before eating. Don't eat uncooked or undercooked meats or fish. Always handle, clean, cook, eat, and store foods properly.
- Don't eat fish with lots of mercury, including swordfish, king mackerel, shark, and tilefish.

Lifestyle do's and don'ts

- Gain a healthy amount of weight. Your doctor can tell you how much weight gain you should aim for during pregnancy.
- Don't smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs. These can cause long-term harm or death to your baby. Ask your doctor for help quitting.

- Unless your doctor tells you not to, try to get at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week. It's best to spread out your workouts throughout the week. If you worked out regularly before pregnancy, you can keep up your activity level as long as your health doesn't change and you talk to your doctor about your activity level throughout your pregnancy. Learn more about [how to have a fit pregnancy](#).
- Don't take very hot baths or use hot tubs or saunas.
- Get plenty of sleep and find ways to control stress.
- Get informed. Read books, watch videos, go to a childbirth class, and talk with moms you know.
- Ask your doctor about childbirth education classes for you and your partner. Classes can help you prepare for the birth of your baby.

Environmental do's and don'ts

- Stay away from chemicals like [insecticides](#), solvents (like some cleaners or paint thinners), lead, mercury, and paint (including paint fumes). Not all products have pregnancy warnings on their labels. If you're unsure if a product is safe, ask your doctor before using it. Talk to your doctor if you are worried that chemicals used in your workplace might be harmful.
- If you have a cat, ask your doctor about [toxoplasmosis](#). This infection is caused by a parasite sometimes found in cat feces. If not treated toxoplasmosis can cause birth defects. You can lower your risk of by avoiding cat litter and wearing gloves when gardening.
- Avoid contact with rodents, including pet rodents, and with their urine, droppings, or nesting material. Rodents can carry a virus that can be harmful or even deadly to your unborn baby.
- Take steps to avoid illness, such as washing hands frequently.
- Stay away from secondhand smoke.

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