

Dos and Don'ts

PRINT-AND-GO GUIDE

Eat this. Don't eat that. Do this. Don't do that. Pregnant women are bombarded with Dos and Don'ts. It's tough to keep it all straight. Pregnancy Dos are listed below. The next page has a list of pregnancy Don'ts.

Pregnancy Dos

- See your doctor regularly. Prenatal care can help keep you and your baby healthy and spot problems if they occur.
- Get 400 micrograms (400 mcg or 0.4 mg) of folic acid every day before and during pregnancy. Getting enough folic acid lowers the risk of some birth defects. Taking a vitamin with folic acid will help you to be sure you are getting enough.
- Eat a variety of healthy foods. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, calcium-rich foods, and lean meats.
- Get all essential nutrients, including iron, every day. Getting enough iron prevents anemia, which is linked to preterm birth and low-birth weight babies. Ask your doctor about taking a daily prenatal vitamin or iron supplement.
- Drink extra fluids, especially water.
- Get moving! Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, physical activity is good for you and your baby.
- Gain a healthy amount of weight. Gaining more than the recommended amount during pregnancy increases a woman's risk for pregnancy complications. It also makes it harder to lose the extra pounds after childbirth. Check with your doctor to find out how much weight you should gain during pregnancy.

- Wash hands, especially after handling raw meat or using the bathroom.
- Get enough sleep. Aim for 7 to 9 hours every night. Resting on your left side helps blood flow to you and your baby and prevents swelling. Using pillows between your legs and under your belly will help you get comfortable.
- Set limits. If you can, control the stress in your life and set limits. Don't be afraid to say no to requests for your time and energy. Ask for help from others.
- Make sure health problems are treated and kept under control. If you have diabetes, control your blood sugar levels. If you have high blood pressure, monitor it closely.
- Ask your doctor before stopping any medicines you take or taking any new medicines. Prescription, over-the-counter, and herbal medicine all can harm your baby.
- Get a flu shot if your baby's due date is between March and July. Pregnant women can get very sick from the flu and may need hospital care. Ask your doctor about the flu vaccine.
- Always wear a seatbelt. The lap strap should go under your belly, across your hips. The shoulder strap should go between your breasts and to the side of your belly. Make sure it fits snugly.
- Join a childbirth or parenting class.

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Steer clear of these pregnancy no-nos to help keep you and your baby safe and healthy.

Pregnancy Don'ts

- Don't smoke tobacco. Quitting is hard, but you can do it! Ask your doctor for help. Smoking during pregnancy passes nicotine and cancer-causing drugs to your baby. Smoking also keeps your baby from getting needed nourishment and raises the risk of miscarriage, preterm birth, and infant death.
- Avoid exposure to toxic substances and chemicals, such as cleaning solvents, lead and mercury, some insecticides, and paint. Pregnant women should avoid exposure to paint fumes.
- Protect yourself and your baby from food-borne illness, which can cause serious health problems and even death. Handle, clean, cook, eat, and store food properly.
- Don't drink alcohol. There is no known safe amount of alcohol a woman can drink while pregnant. Both drinking every day and drinking a lot of alcohol once in a while during pregnancy can harm the baby.
- Don't use illegal drugs. Tell your doctor if you are using drugs. Marijuana, cocaine, heroin, speed (amphetamines), barbiturates, and LSD are very dangerous for you and your baby.
- Don't clean or change a cat's litter box. This could put you at risk for toxoplasmosis, an infection that can be very harmful to the fetus.
- Don't eat fish with lots of mercury, including swordfish, king mackerel, shark, and tilefish.
- Avoid contact with rodents and with their urine, droppings, or nesting material. This includes household pests and pet rodents, such as guinea pigs and hamsters. Rodents can carry a virus that can be harmful or even deadly to your unborn baby.
- Don't take very hot baths or use hot tubs or saunas. High temperatures can be harmful to the fetus, or cause you to faint.
- Don't use scented feminine hygiene products. Pregnant women should avoid scented sprays, sanitary napkins, and bubble bath. These products might irritate your vaginal area, and increase your risk of a urinary tract infection or yeast infection.
- Don't douche. Douching can irritate the vagina, force air into the birth canal and increase the increase the risk of infection.
- Avoid x-rays. If you must have dental work or diagnostic tests, tell your dentist or physician that you are pregnant so that extra care can be taken.