

Oregon Medical Group

Center for Women's Health and West Eugene Medical Center

FAQ for Pregnancy

Questions on food and drink

What is my restriction on caffeine during pregnancy?

A: Caffeine is a stimulant present in coffee, some teas, chocolate, soda pop, and some other beverages. If you can quit drinking caffeine for pregnancy, that is great. If not, then cutting back to one to two 6 oz. cups of coffee or soda per day is ok. If you are used to caffeine, you may experience headache when caffeine is discontinued.

How much fluid or water do I need to have every day?

A: During pregnancy, the recommendation is to have 80-100oz. of water and fluids (2400-3000ml) in a 24 hour period. During summer and hot months, you may need even more. If you cannot attain this specifically, you should be trying to drink enough fluids so that the color of your urine is very light yellow (straw-colored) to colorless.

Why should I not drink alcohol during pregnancy?

A: Alcohol is not recommended at any time during pregnancy due to its harmful effects on the baby's developing brain and body, however, some women may have consumed alcohol before the pregnancy was known. Most of the time, this is ok, but it is not safe for baby overall and research has shown that harm can happen at any time so it is best to abstain completely for all three trimesters as soon as the pregnancy is known.

I was told I can't have lunch meat. What are my alternatives?

A: Deli lunch meats, especially those that are processed in manufacturing plants or left out in the deli for extended periods of time, are known to have a risk of *Listeria*, a bacteria that can grow in cold temperatures. It is best to avoid these during pregnancy or heat them at least 30sec in the microwave to steaming hot. Alternatively, you can have things like rotisserie chicken, crockpot meats like beef or turkey, canned light tuna fish, or cooked chicken on sandwiches and salads. It is ok to have cold cuts of packaged deli meats that have not been sitting out in the air.

What kinds of herbal teas are ok to drink?

A: Herbal teas that are single ingredient of the following are fine to drink: spearmint, peppermint, ginger, and lemon. Other herbal ingredients have not been studied in pregnancy so the recommendation is to avoid them, if possible, since we do not know how they will affect your baby. In particular, do not have any tea with primrose, milk thistle, chamomile, or mustard as these have been shown to increase the risk of miscarriage and/or other problems.

I am vegetarian or vegan and I don't eat meat or eggs of any kind. Am I able to eat a vegetarian or vegan diet and still get enough nutrients for my baby?

A: Yes, but you need to make sure that you are getting proper protein. Proteins are made of amino acids and there are 23 of them needed for the human diet, 9 are considered essential amino acids that we cannot manufacture on our own, so we must get them from food sources. Animal food sources have all essential amino acids, but very few plant sources have them all. However, it is possible to combine foods so as to get them all over the course of a day or two. This is known as a "complete protein." Food combinations that have beans with either nuts, whole grains, or seeds are complete proteins. Examples are rice and beans, tortilla and beans, nut butter on whole-grain bread, or hummus with pita bread. Quinoa and soy are plant-based foods that also have a complete protein on their own.

Questions on medications

Are over-the-counter prenatal vitamins ok to take?

A: Yes, most prenatal vitamins are fairly similar. The ingredients that are important for pregnancy especially are the folic acid (or folate) content and the iron content. There needs to be 800-1000mcg of folic acid, which is what most prenatal vitamins have, but do be sure to double check this. Iron content can vary, and if you have a tendency to be anemic, then one with more iron can be prescribed.

Please also refer to the over-the-counter medication list in your OB binder and call if you have specific medication questions that are not covered there.

Questions on activity

What kind of exercise should I do?

A: It is recommended to maintain a light exercise regimen when pregnant, but not to start anything new. Activities like walking, light water aerobics, moderate weight training, low impact aerobics, swimming, non-competitive racket sports, golf, stationary bicycle, and other light exercise is advised. You want to maintain a heart rate of 140 or below when you exercise. You should not be so out of breath that you cannot talk; if this is the case, you are over-doing it. Activities that are restricted include anything that would cause you to accidentally fall or hurt your belly in any way, or any activity where your feet would be airborne at the same time, especially in later terms of pregnancy.

Can I have sex when I am pregnant?

A: Yes. It is safe to have intercourse throughout pregnancy up until you are in labor, as long as you do not have any pre-term labor, bleeding related to a placenta problem, or other problems where your doctor will place you on pelvic rest. You may find that you bleed after intercourse sometimes due to your cervix being extra sensitive. Although this is not usually concerning for the baby, you

are welcome to call if this happens so that we can discuss with you. Do not have intercourse if you feel your water has broken.

Can I get a massage when I am pregnant?

A: Massage is ok during pregnancy, however, you want to make sure that you ensure your massage therapist has training in prenatal massage and that you do not lie with your belly placed through a table with a hole in the middle. Keep in mind also that it is not recommended to lie on your back for extended periods of time in later terms of pregnancy, so instead lie on your side.

What about travel?

A: Airline travel, unless otherwise not recommended by your doctor, is deemed safe up until 32 weeks gestation. You do need to stretch your legs out regularly when you are sitting for extended periods of time on a plane (over an hour). Car trips are also ok with the following limitations: no more than 5-6 hours of driving per day, always wear your seatbelt, and stop about every 1-2 hours to walk around for about 10 minutes to prevent blood clots.

Questions on environmental substances

Why should I not smoke during pregnancy?

A: Smoking cigarettes or other nicotine-containing products can expose your baby to harmful chemicals like nicotine, tar, and carbon monoxide. Nicotine constricts blood vessels in the placenta which allows less oxygen to circulate from your blood to your baby's. Babies whose mothers smoke tend to be growth-restricted due to this fact, which means they can be underweight when they are born. Infants of smoking mothers also have an increased risk for miscarriage, still birth, SIDS, and health problems during infancy.

Is it ok to color my hair with a home kit or get it done at the beauty shop?

A: Avoid all types of hair coloring in the first 3 months of pregnancy when many of the fetal organ systems are developing. After 13 weeks, OK to use semi-permanent dye and wave solutions, but don't rub or scrub into the scalp. Highlights will give less exposure than all-over color.

Can I paint the baby's room safely?

A: Yes, but you need to take precautions. If you are going to paint, you should not stand on any ladders or step-stools and you need to make sure that the room is well-ventilated. This means you have all the windows open and a fan going the whole time so you are not breathing in the fumes from the paint. You need to use latex paints rather than oil-based as these have less toxic fumes. It is better to have someone else do this kind of work if possible.

Is it ok to use bug spray when I am pregnant?

A: Yes, but the chemicals used in some bug spray can be toxic, especially the one commonly used (DEET). It is ok to use sprays with citronella as long as there is no DEET.

Is it ok to go tanning when I am pregnant? What about spray tans?

A: No, it is not safe to go tanning in a regular tanning salon at any time in pregnancy or otherwise as they are a known source of cancer-causing radiation. However, the vegetable-based oils used in spray tanning are deemed safe.

Is it ok to get my nails done?

A: Yes, as long as the area is well-ventilated. Good advice is that if the nail technician needs to wear a mask to work on your nails, then you also need to wear one.

Pregnancy-specific and medical questions

Should I make a birth plan?

A: Birth plans are fine, especially if you have specifics that you would like to make hospital staff and other staff aware of, and you are welcome to do one if you choose. Keep in mind though that things can change rapidly when you are in labor and occasionally, a birth plan cannot be honored, if it means that either you or the baby would be at greater risk. Don't let this defeat you or make you feel like you failed. Hospital staff will be supportive of you and your plan, no matter what you decide, as long as they can monitor you and your baby safely and avoid any emergencies.

What if I have trouble sleeping?

A: Try to develop a good sleep hygiene routine of going to bed at roughly the same time every night. Decrease your activity and mental stimulation level as you prepare for bed. This may include turning off all electronic "screens" such as TV, computer, and smart phones at least an hour before bed, taking a warm bath, drinking a glass of warm milk, eating a banana or a cup of oatmeal, not exercising or engaging in much physical activity at least 2 hours before bedtime, asking your partner for a foot massage, or developing a routine of calm activities before bedtime. The OTC med list in your binder offers OTC medication suggestions if you require an occasional sleep aid.

What if I'm bleeding?

A: Many women experience spotting or bleeding in the first trimester. Bleeding may be normal or be associated with an ectopic pregnancy or miscarriage. Spotting can be normal after intercourse and any examination in the office. If bleeding is less than a period, please call the office during normal office hours for an evaluation. If the bleeding is heavy (soaking a pad in 15 minutes 4 times in a row or soaking a pad in one hour 4 times in a row) or accompanied by severe pain or cramping, go to ER or After Hours Clinic, or call to speak with the doctor on call.

OMG would like to wish you the best for a healthy pregnancy. Overall, it is best to try to have as natural a pregnancy as possible, free of chemical exposure and other toxic substances, and to give your body and your baby as much chance to be healthy as you possibly can. We are here to help you. If you have further questions or concerns that are not addressed here or elsewhere in the paperwork, please don't hesitate to call. Triage nurses are available between 8am and 5pm at either office number.