

GOOD HEALTH DURING PREGNANCY CAN HELP PREVENT PRETERM BIRTH

WHEN SHOULD YOU SEE YOUR PROVIDER DURING PREGNANCY?

Go see your health care provider as soon as you think you are pregnant. Go to all your scheduled visits during pregnancy, even if you're feeling fine. Taking good care of yourself while you are pregnant is important. It increases the chances your baby will be healthy, and it can help prevent preterm birth. Preterm birth is birth that happens too early, before 37 weeks of pregnancy.

WHY IS FOLIC ACID IMPORTANT?

All women who could become pregnant should take a multivitamin that has 400 micrograms of folic acid in it each day. Taking folic acid before pregnancy and in the first few months of pregnancy can help prevent birth defects of the brain and spine. These birth defects can happen in the first 28 days of pregnancy, before most women know they're pregnant, so you should take the vitamin every day even before you get pregnant.

Your provider may suggest you take a prenatal vitamin each day during pregnancy instead of a multivitamin. Prenatal vitamins have 600 micrograms of folic acid. This is the amount you need during pregnancy to help protect your baby.

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO TO KEEP HEALTHY DURING PREGNANCY?

- Drink 8 to 10 glasses of water every day. Drinking water can:
 - Keep the fluid that surrounds your baby at the right level.
 - Stop the signs of preterm labor.
 - Help you digest food.
 - Help with constipation.
 - Prevent infections of the bladder that can cause preterm labor.
- Don't smoke, drink alcohol or take illegal drugs. Stay away from others who smoke.
- Ask your provider before you take any medicine. This includes prescription medicine, over-the-counter medicine and herbal medicine. If you are taking a prescription medicine and you find out you are pregnant, do not stop taking the medicine until you talk to your provider.
- Limit caffeine to 2 drinks each day. Drinks with caffeine include coffee, tea, cola and hot chocolate. If you don't usually have these drinks, don't start drinking them during pregnancy.
- Stay out of hot tubs, saunas and steam rooms. Getting overheated can increase the chances of birth defects of the baby's brain and spine, especially early in pregnancy.

- Don't touch used cat litter or eat undercooked meat. These can spread an infection called toxoplasmosis, which can hurt your baby.
- Reduce the stress in your life. Ask family and friends to help out around the house. Get help if your partner is abusive. If you're feeling down, talk to your provider.
- Ask your provider how much weight you should gain during pregnancy. The right amount is usually 25 to 35 pounds for a woman who begins pregnancy at a normal weight.
- Go to prenatal classes.
- Ask your provider for information on breastfeeding.
- See a dentist every six months.