

Symptoms of Pregnancy

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For a woman having a regular monthly cycle, the earliest and most reliable sign of pregnancy is a missed period, or sometimes women who are pregnant have a very light period, losing only a little blood. Other signs are:

- Feeling sick, not necessarily in the morning, but at any time.
- The breasts may become larger and tender. Veins may become prominent and nipples may darken and stand out.
- Increased frequency in passing urine.
- Tendency for constipation.
- Tiredness.
- An increased vaginal discharge without any associated complaint.
- A metallic taste in the mouth.
- Dislike for certain things like tea or coffee or fatty foods.
- Increased liking for certain things like spicy foods.

Pregnancy test can be carried out on urine samples, as early as from the first day of a missed period-that is, about fourteen days after the conception. A positive test result is almost definitive of pregnancy. If the test is negative, it is less reliable. It can be repeated after a week, or a doctor can be consulted.

What you should eat?

Pregnancy puts additional nutritional demands on your body. You require to eat judiciously to meet the demands of the body. Make sure that you eat a mixture of different foods each day in order to get all the various nutrients that you and your baby need. Your diet should have plenty of fruit and vegetables which provide vitamins, minerals and fibre. Eat them lightly cooked or raw. Let starchy foods like bread, potatoes, rice and breakfast cereals with vegetables form the main part of any meal.

Eat some good sources of nutrients like fish, eggs, cheese, beans, and lentils every day. Dairy products like milk, cheese and yogurt are important as they contain calcium and other nutrients needed for your baby's development. Avoid sugar and sugary foods like sweets, biscuits and cakes and sugary drinks like cola. Cut down on fat and fatty foods as well.

Mineral and Vitamin Supplements

A large number of pregnant women suffer from varying degrees of anemia so additional iron supplementation

is provided by pills. Also tablets of Folic acid (a vitamin necessary to prevent certain spinal disorders in the growing baby) along with Calcium are generally prescribed by the health care providers.

Pregnancy and Weight

Most women gain between 10 -12.5kgs (22 - 28lbs). Weight gain varies a great deal and depends on your weight before pregnancy. Weight gain significantly more or less than the average could be an indicator of a problem, so you must monitor your weight gain carefully. Also if you weigh more than 100kg or under 50kg your health care provider may have special advise for you.

Smoking During Pregnancy

Try to stop. When you smoke, carbon monoxide and nicotine passes into your lungs and blood stream. This means that: a) your baby gets less oxygen and cannot grow as well as it should, and b) the nicotine makes your baby's heart beat faster. Constantly breathing in other people's smoke may also have a harmful effect.

Babies of mothers who smoke are, on average, 200g (about 8 oz) lighter than other babies. These babies may have problems during and after labour and are more prone to infection; it will be better for your baby later too if you stop smoking. Children whose parents smoke are more likely to suffer from illnesses such as asthma; and there is an increased risk of cot death.

Alcohol

It has now been shown that even small amounts of alcohol can be harmful to your baby. Alcohol has adverse effects on the baby's development and can produce a lot of anomalies generally termed as 'Fetal Alcohol Syndrome'. So to be safe avoid alcohol totally during your pregnancy.

Pills Medicines and Other Drugs

You should be very careful while taking any kind of medication, specially in the earlier part of the pregnancy. Majority of drugs have some effects on the growing fetus and the first three months are crucial. You would be better off asking your doctor about any medications you want to take. Make sure your doctor or dentist knows you're pregnant before prescribing anything or giving you treatment.

At the same time it is important to remember that if you on treatment for some chronic conditions like epilepsy or diabetes you consult your doctor and continue your medications because control of such conditions is vitally important for you as well as the pregnancy.