

Keeping healthy during pregnancy

Information and advice for mums-to-be

Maternity

We are pleased you have chosen our services for your journey through pregnancy, birth and into parenthood. You will have lots of information to think about over the next few months and we are here to help you.

This booklet gives you information about how to keep healthy during pregnancy. If you want to discuss any of the information contained in the booklet, please speak to your midwife.

Smoking

We strongly advise you do not smoke during pregnancy as it can increase the risk of:

- Miscarriage,
- Having a premature baby,
- Your baby being born underweight, or
- Your waters breaking early which will put your baby at increased risk of infection.

Passive smoking (being around other people who smoke) also affects your baby.

If you or your partner would like to stop smoking, ask your midwife to refer you to the stop smoking service.

Foods to avoid during pregnancy

There are some foods to avoid during pregnancy as they may make you ill or harm your baby.

- **Cheese** - Avoid soft cheeses with white rinds such as Brie, Camembert and soft blue cheeses such as Gorgonzola as they may contain bacteria that could harm your baby. You can eat hard cheeses such as Cheddar and you can eat some soft cheeses such as processed cheese spreads.
- **Meat** - Raw or under cooked meat is a possible source of harmful bacteria for your unborn baby and should be avoided during pregnancy. Make sure meat is cooked thoroughly.
- **Eggs** - Some eggs are produced under the British Lion Code of practice, eggs produced in this way have a red lion logo stamped on their shell – these eggs are safe to eat fully cooked in pregnancy. If eggs do not have the red lion logo stamped on their shell or you are unsure (for example, in a restaurant) then ensure the eggs are cooked thoroughly until solid.
- **Liver** - Liver and liver products such as pate are not safe to eat in pregnancy as they contain large amounts of vitamin A which can be harmful to your unborn baby.
- **Seafood** - Avoid raw seafood such as oysters or sushi that has not been frozen.
- **Fish** - Avoid shark, swordfish and marlin as they contain unsafe levels of naturally occurring mercury. Tuna contains a small amount of mercury, it is therefore best to avoid eating more than four medium-sized cans, or two fresh tuna steaks per week. Avoid having more than 2 portions of oily fish a week, such as salmon, trout, mackerel and herring.

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A full list of foods to avoid in pregnancy can be found on the NHS website on the 'Your pregnancy and baby guide' at www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby.

Drinks to avoid during pregnancy

- You should stop drinking alcohol during pregnancy as it can increase the risk of miscarriage, premature birth and low birth weight as well as a condition called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
- You don't need to cut caffeine out completely, but you should limit how much you have to no more than 200mg a day (One mug of instant coffee contains 100mg of caffeine; one mug of tea contains 75mg of caffeine). Try decaffeinated tea and coffee, fruit juice or water. Remember energy drinks and chocolate contain caffeine too. High levels of caffeine during pregnancy can result in miscarriage or baby being born with a low birth weight.

Vitamins

Folic acid (400 micrograms a day) should be taken until you are 13 weeks pregnant – this reduces the risk of your baby having spina bifida (When the spine and spinal cord do not develop properly, leaving a gap in the spine).

We also advise you to take vitamin D (10 micrograms a day) throughout your pregnancy – this will help your baby's bones to develop.

Medicines

If you take any medicine regularly please check with your doctor that it is safe to carry on. You should check with the pharmacist about any medicine or herbal preparation that can be bought over the counter. All pregnant women and new mums are entitled to free prescriptions, please ask your midwife or GP for a form.

If you are currently taking antidepressants the midwife will advise you to continue until you have been advised by specialist mental wellbeing services or your GP.

Exercise

Most exercise is safe during pregnancy but you should avoid scuba diving and any contact sports where you might be hit in the stomach or fall. If you do not do any exercise then you should consider doing light exercises such as walking or swimming. Your local swimming baths may also have aquanatal classes you can join which are for women who are pregnant.

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Work

Most women can continue working during pregnancy. By law you are allowed a health and safety assessment to make sure your job does not put you or your baby at risk while you are pregnant. For more information on working, benefits, maternity leave and pay while you are pregnant you can contact the Working Families charity on the details below. They can also help if you are being treated unfairly at work:

Website: www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Tel: 0300 0120 312

Travel

- When in the car, you still need to wear your seat belt when you are pregnant. The diagonal strap should be across your body between your breasts and the lap belt over your upper thighs. This means the straps lie above and below your bump. It is important to take regular breaks on a long journey and to get out and stretch your legs.
- If you want to go on a plane after 28 weeks of your pregnancy, you will need a letter from your GP. Make sure you have holiday insurance and invest in some 'flight socks' to reduce the risk of blood clots in your legs. Please ask your midwife for further information on flying.

Vaccines during pregnancy

- Seasonal flu: Pregnant women are more at risk of complications if they get seasonal flu so you are advised to be vaccinated against it. You can have the vaccine at any stage in your pregnancy. Ask your midwife or GP for more information, or search 'flu vaccine' at www.nhs.uk.
- COVID vaccine: Pregnant women are advised to have the COVID vaccine
- Whooping cough: There has been a rise in the number of whooping cough cases in the UK. If you have the vaccination from 16 weeks of pregnancy this will help protect your baby from whooping cough in the first few weeks of their life. Ask your midwife or GP for more information, or search 'whooping cough' at www.nhs.uk.

Your emotions

Most women are emotional in the first few months of pregnancy; you may cry more easily or feel more tired. If your mood stays like this as your pregnancy progresses, please speak to your midwife.

Antenatal depression is common and can affect 1 out of 5 women. We can provide support and treatment to help you with this.

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For More Help and Advice

National Contacts

Drinkline	Tel: 0300 123 1110
FRANK - drugs helpline	Tel: 0300 123 6600
NHS Pregnancy Smoking Helpline	Tel: 08001690169
National Breastfeeding Helpline	Tel: 0300 100 0212
NHS Choices	Website: www.nhs.uk
NHS emergency care	Tel: 111
Antenatal Results and Choices	Tel: 0207 713 7486
National Childbirth Trust	Tel: 0300 330 0700
Health and Safety Executive - at work during pregnancy Website: www.hse.gov.uk	
TAMBA – twins and multiple births association (10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. & 7.00 p.m. – 10.00 p.m.) Tel: 0800 138 0509 Website: www.tamba.org.uk – for twins (or more)	
Contact a Family – for families with children with disabilities Tel: 08088083555 Website: www.cafamily.org.uk	
Working families – advice on rights at work for parents and carers Tel: 0300 012 0312 Website: www.workingfamilies.org.uk	

Local information

Sandwell Breastfeeding Network - 07505775357
Birmingham Women's Aid - 0808 800 0028
Black Country Women's Aid - 0121 553 0090
Refugee Council - 0121 446 5118
Birmingham Settlement - for money advice and people suffering from isolation Tel: 0121 250 0777 Website: www.birminghamsettlement.org.uk
Swanswell - for alcohol and drug problems Tel: 0121 633 1750 Website: www.swanswell.org
Acacia - for pre and postnatal depression in Birmingham Tel: 0121 301 5990 Website: www.acacia.org.uk

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Citizens Advice Bureau Birmingham: 03444 771 010 Sandwell: 03444 111 444
Cranstoun (Sandwell) - for alcohol and drug problems Tel: 0121 553 1333 Website: https://cranstoun.org/help-and-advice/alcohol-other-drugs/sandwell/
CGL (Change, Grow, Live) (Birmingham) - for alcohol and drug problems Tel: 0121 227 5890 Website: www.changegrowlive.org/

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