

TEN TIPS FOR PREGNANCY



- 1 Birth attendants:** An obstetrician is a medical doctor who has specialty training in high risk surgical problems, high risk medical problems and delivers babies in a hospitals and birthing centers. A midwife is a trained, medical professional; certified nurse midwives deliver in hospitals, birthing centers or at home, and lay midwives deliver at home births. Ask potential birth attendants: Do they have a group practice? What percentage of deliveries do they do on their own? What percentage of their deliveries include interventions and surgery? Do you like their communication style and do you feel comfortable with them?
- 2 Using a doula:** A doula is a trained professional who is there to assist and support a labor and delivery, but they are not medical personnel and they do not diagnose and treat. They can help with the birth plan, be the liason between the delivering woman and the hospital staff. They can assist the partner. They can communicate with the extended family.
- 3 Write a birth plan:** Write a birth plan so that your wishes are easily presented to the team of birth attendants, including lighting, medication, and desired procedures after the baby is born; but keep an open mind and be prepared to completely let your birth plan go. No two pregnancies, labors or deliveries are exactly alike, so stay informed and flexible as your labor progresses.
- 4 Creating a non-toxic nursery:** With new paint and new furniture, your nursery could have up to 300 chemicals in the air. Create a non-toxic nursery with VOC Paint, non-toxic carpet, and formaldehyde-free wood. Look for recycled and vintage furniture to avoid off-gassing. Keep your nursery and home safe by buying non-toxic household products.
- 5 Nutrition and exercise during pregnancy:** Exercising during pregnancy increases muscle mass, strengthens connective tissue, keeps your bone density up, reduces depression, lowers your risk of diabetes and hypertension and helps with pregnancy itself. Good nutrition includes avoiding GMO's, eating an organic diet whenever possible, constant hydration and Omega 3's.
- 6 Tips for morning sickness:** Avoid an empty stomach with small, frequent meals. Avoid fatty foods and eat a bland diet. Drink lots of fluid in small sips. Saltine crackers, ginger and ginger capsules can be helpful. Acupuncture, vitamins and supplements can help, too. Medication may be indicated.
- 7 Prenatal tests:** There are multiple prenatal screenings to see if your baby is chromosomally typical. Blood tests, ultrasound, and the nuchal translucency tests screen for Down's syndrome, Trisomy 18 and spinal defects. Diagnostics tests are done after a high positive risk screening. A CVS test is done at 12-14 weeks. An amniocentesis is done at about 18-20 weeks. These more invasive tests are not without risk to the baby.

TEN TIPS FOR PREGNANCY CONTINUED

8 Getting familiar with hospital protocol: Knowing what to expect when you arrive at the hospital can help avoid stress and fear of the unknown. Once you are admitted to “Labor and Delivery,” they will check your vital signs including blood pressure, pulse, and respiratory rate. They will monitor your baby to track the fetal heart rate, and the frequency of your contractions. They will check your cervix for dilation, examine you for leaking fluid and ruptured membranes, and then they will call your obstetrician or midwife and present your status to him or her. They will probably start an IV for hydration, and blood work will be taken for the hospital.

9 What to expect after birth: Let the umbilical cord finish pulsing before it is cut. Skin-to-skin bonding promotes your baby’s first latch at the breast. The nurse will check your baby’s vital signs including the heart rate, breathing, and an APGAR score. At the nursery your baby will be weighed, measured in length and head circumference, and vital signs will be checked. S/he will get a Dubowitz core, a bath, and a Vitamin K shot, as well as erythromycin drops in the eye, and the first of the Hepatitis B vaccine series. 24 hours after birth is the PKU blood test.

10 It’s not too early to find a pediatrician: Ask friends for recommendations. Consider the pediatrician’s proximity to your residence. Interview potential pediatricians for their views on feeding, sleep, and medication. Do you like their communication style and do you feel comfortable with them?

The following expert interviews contributed to this “Ten Tips for Pregnancy”: Alan Greene, MD, Lauren D. Hyman, MD, Paul Crane, MD, Rachel Sarnoff, Shamsah Amersi, MD, Suzanne Gilbert-Lenz, MD, Jay Goldberg, MD, Tanya Altmann, MD, and Tom Williams, PhD.