

A close-up photograph of a pregnant woman's bare belly. Her hands are gently cupping the lower half of her abdomen, with her fingers spread. She is wearing a white t-shirt and grey maternity pants with a white drawstring. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

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R HealthBeat

Quarterly Health Magazine - Vol. 15, Nov. 2017

Exercises that
get a green light
during pregnancy

Tackling
gestational
diabetes

Planning
to start
a family?

All you need
to know about
the C-section

***New Dads,
your maternity ward
survival guide!***

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From the Editor's Desk

Hello Readers,

We are entering the festivities this time around and it's time to celebrate new beginnings and usher into a delightful phase!

Speaking of celebrating new beginnings, our theme for this edition is 'Motherhood'. This edition not only gives information to the new mothers and those who are experiencing motherhood but also gives valued details for the new dads whose motto at the given time would be 'We are pregnant.'

“What's more! The delightful line up of the magazine commences with 'Facts of Motherhood: The beginning' which details the changes in a woman's body during pregnancy and the calendar of birth”

Being a parent is a crucial decision and to help you with it are the articles 'Answering the pregnancy myths' and 'Planning a Family-The essentials'.

It is imperative for us to know about the various birthing techniques and the alternative to normal birth that is the C-section in 'Bump and Baby birth: C-section'.

Fitness is the mantra of the new age mom to be which is precisely what 'Healthy and Hearty Pregnancy' and 'Diabetes during Pregnancy' entails.

Having a healthy mind and body is closely associated with eating the right food and relaxing during those 9 months. Here, 'Nutrition during Pregnancy' and 'Pamper yourself during those 9 months' gives you a gist of what food you should eat and how to de-stress.

We at RGI always like to keep our colleagues prepared for any unforeseen circumstances with proper knowledge in hand. One such instance is C-section delivery which we have covered in 'What you need to know about C-section' which aims to prepare the expecting couples without any myths in mind.

Warm regards,
Rakesh Jain



Rakesh Jain

Chief Executive Officer
Reliance General Insurance

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Look what our **readers have to say** about R HealthBeat

We get the quarterly scoop on how to live a happy, healthy life through this magazine. It covers the full gamut from health and empowers the readers with knowledge of essential fitness topics and resources needed to enjoy optimum physical and emotional wellness at every stage of life. Every Issue of R HealthBeat contains a variety of content, ranging from feature stories to physician-written columns, local interest to general interest. We appreciate that we get the required information from the magazine issued to us from Reliance.

Shruthi Nischal

HR Business Partner

Since I started reading R HealthBeat, I always look for the next issue. It is not only refreshing and informative but also adds lot of insights in day-to-day life. It is not a mere health magazine for me but a life magazine. I have to share the same with my family on their demand every month. Keep inspiring!

Debabrata Bhattacharya

General Manager (Finance),
CESC Limited

Reliance HealthBeat's 14th edition was a good health magazine initiated by RGI. Life's always at peace in the lap of nature as this edition illustrates and gives an integrated information on holistic and modern therapies. A complete guide to health, yoga, diet and medicine. Wishing all the best to RGI team for this informative initiative.

Sanjay Bakshi

Associate Vice President (Insurance), NDTV

Scan the QR code to read
the previous editions of
R HealthBeat



GET IN TOUCH

We look forward to getting to know you better!

We welcome your suggestions, questions or ideas. Also to know more about our Wellness Program you could write to us at rgicl.rcarehealth@relianceada.com

Visit www.reliancegeneral.co.in for more articles and updates on Healthy Living and Wellness.



FACTS ABOUT MOTHERHOOD

YOU SHOULD BE ACQUAINTED WITH

1



Women are born with **1.2 million eggs**, however only 300 to 400 are released through ovulation.

2



The egg only lives about **12 to 24 hours** after leaving the ovary

3



Sperm can only live for **3 to 5 days**

4



The average menstrual cycle is from **28 to 32 days**

5



Weight loss of 5-19% can dramatically improve ovulation and pregnancy rates

6



A Harvard Medical School study on women with fertility problems said that 56% of those who completed a 10 week course of **relaxation training & stress reduction** had a viable pregnancy within one year compared to just 20% of the group who had no stress reduction training.

7



A pregnancy test

measures a hormone in the body called Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (HCG). HCG is a hormone produced during pregnancy. It appears in the blood and urine of pregnant women as early as 10 days after conception.

8



A healthy 30 year old woman

has 20% chance per month of getting pregnant whereas a healthy 40 year old has about 5% chance. Fertility decreases especially after 35 years of age.

CHANGES OF MOTHERHOOD



Respiratory system:

There will be an increased respiratory rate due to the demand of the growing foetus



Breasts:

Tenderness of breasts is a common side effect of increased estrogen and progesterone levels



Cardiovascular system:

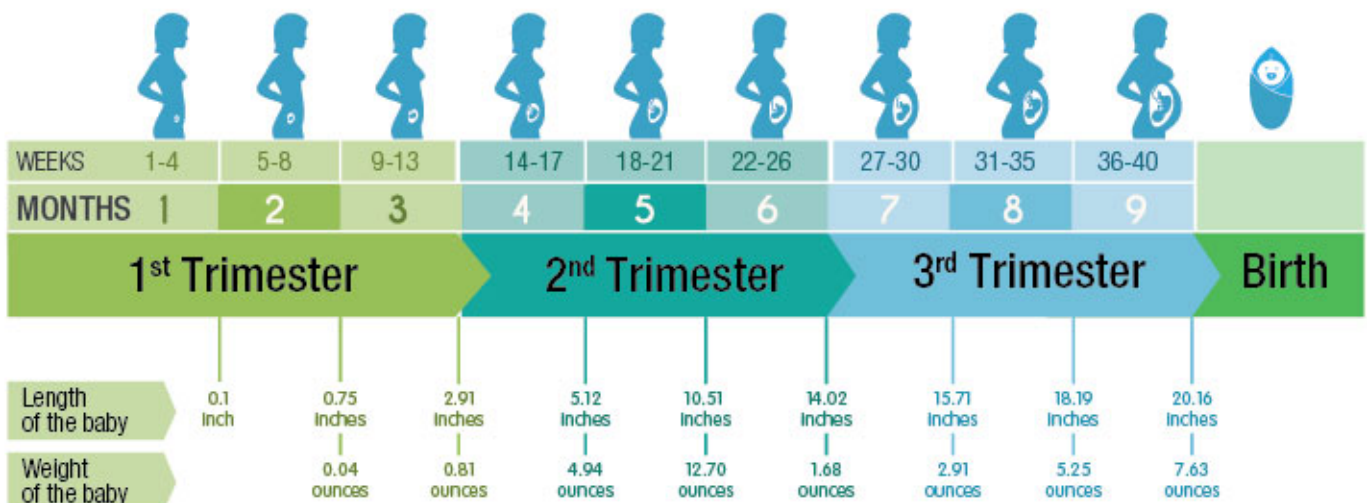
Increased cardiac output, blood volume and heart rate in response to the growing cardiovascular system of the foetus and the mother



Endocrine (hormonal system):

Hormonal changes are very high due to the placenta producing large amounts of estrogen and progesterone to nourish the uterus.

Abdomen: The size of the abdomen changes considerably by the end of the second trimester





Are you planning to start a family?

If you are planning to get onto become three from two but are wondering how to keep the mother and baby healthy, we have got you covered through the following steps:

Folic Acid prevents birth defect

About 4% of all babies have some type of birth defect and this can be prevented by simple steps. For example, Folic Acid (folate) can prevent a devastating birth defect called 'neural tube defect' and many doctors feel that all women should have it, in case they become pregnant. Hence, have folic acid rich foods like leafy vegetables, liver beans, asparagus, beans, oranges, rice, etc. or obtain a prescription pre-natal vitamin containing 400 micrograms of folic day from your doctor.

Tackling medical problems

Women with diabetes should see a doctor before getting pregnant and the mother too gets a lot of benefit from having a controlled blood sugar. Women with kidney disease should also see a doctor as it may become worse in some pregnancies. In case of asthma, go for a check-up and have regular medications as the baby needs oxygen through the umbilical cord to grow and develop.

No exposure to smoking

Women who smoke have a higher chance of delivering small babies which are prone to premature death. Smoking during pregnancy can lead to growth restriction of the baby from lack of oxygen, preterm birth, miscarriage and placenta previa (where the afterbirth is too low and can cause hemorrhage during pregnancy). Hence, quit smoking before you become pregnant.

Caffeine and exercise

Since caffeine may spur miscarriage and fetal growth restriction, most doctors suggest limiting its intake to maximum 2 cups of coffee or 3 soft drinks, per day. Moreover, light exercises are beneficial during pregnancy, but avoid heavy ones like marathon, water skiing etc. Also, swimming is an excellent choice of exercise. Avoid hot tub bath as excessive heat has been linked to birth defects like spina bifida and anencephaly.

The weight connection

Being overweight can sometimes cause serious problems and it also makes much harder to do an ultrasound (sonogram) to evaluate the baby. Hence, emphasis should be for women to maintain a normal weight.

Family History

If you have a family history of sickle cell, thalassemia, mental retardation or any other inherited diseases, consult your doctor to discuss special testing.

Other important things to keep in mind:

- Discontinue alcohol, street drug use and obtain addiction counselling, if needed
- Stop using any unnecessary over-the-counter medications
- If necessary, review all prescription medication use and medical problems with your doctor
- Keep close track of your menstrual periods

Myth #1:

Thou shalt not exercise



As tempting as it can be to declare a state of hibernation, it's actually a good idea to stay active during pregnancy for you, your birth and your baby. It's safe, healthy and so long as your pregnancy is normal you can do what you did before you were pregnant, with exceptions.

Myth #2:

Thou shalt eat for two



Before you start going down the route of 'one for me and one for the baby', you should probably know that this is a big fat myth. You only need to consume a meagre 200 extra calories (on top of the 2000 daily recommended for women) and that's only in your third trimester. Let's face it though, growing a baby can be hungry work and grazing helps ease morning sickness. So try to choose healthy snacks.



Myth #3:

Thou shalt not fly



Worried about booking a baby-moon? Fear not. Revel in the freedom of holidaying without youngsters while you can. Check the FAQs on your airline's website; after week 28, you will need a letter from your doctor to confirm your pregnancy is low risk and you're in good health.

Never hesitate to chat with your midwife if you have any concerns related to bleeding, having a low lying placenta or cervical weakness, which may mean you need to abstain.

Myth #5:

Thou shalt not drink coffee



Before you start weeping into your mocha latte, relax. You don't need to rule out caffeine completely but the NHS recommends limiting yourself to no more than 200mg a day. Be careful though, this can be as little as a filter coffee and a bar of chocolate.

Myth #4:

Thou shalt feel glowing and happy



As many as one in 10 expectant mums feel stressed and anxious. Pregnancy hormones can often be to blame for highs and lows, not to mention coping with pregnancy niggles, the sometimes crippling exhaustion, worrying about giving birth and the responsibilities of parenthood. It can be pretty overwhelming, so if you're not feeling the glow, you're not alone. If your mood or anxieties are getting in the way of daily life, don't hesitate to talk to your midwife.



New Dads,

your maternity ward survival guide!

Hospitals and maternity units can be confusing places at the best of times. They're all different, so this is just a guide to the kind of things you can expect.

When you arrive

Find the admission desk and let them know you've arrived. If you've got your maternity notes, hand them in. You'll be taken to the labour ward, where she'll get changed into a gown or nightdress.

What happens first

The nurse will need to find out what's been happening so far and to make sure nothing is wrong. The nurse will:

- Check her pulse, temperature, blood pressure and urine
- Feel her abdomen to find out the baby's position
- Listen to the baby's heart
- Do an internal examination to find out how much her cervix has opened and how far the labour has gone
- If you don't understand anything that's happening, ask the nurse, especially if either of you is worried

The delivery room

Some hospitals have delivery units decorated more like a room at home than a hospital ward, with different places to sit, easy chairs and maybe beanbags, to give mom-to-be space to move around and change position during labour.

Take it easy

She'll be in the first stage of labour for a while; it could be as much as 12 hours. So there's no need to panic. It's the calm before the storm!

HOW TO TACKLE GESTATIONAL DIABETES?

While all else may be going just fine, some expecting mothers start developing high blood sugar levels between the 24th and 28th week of pregnancy. This is known as gestational diabetes mellitus, similar to other types of diabetes, and it affects how your cells use sugar (glucose).

Up to 9.2% of pregnant women suffer from this problem, according to a 2014 analysis by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention. In fact, it is recommended that all women get tested for gestational diabetes at the beginning of the third trimester.

The exact cause of GDM is unknown, but the hormonal changes during pregnancy play a key role. During pregnancy, the body produces larger amounts of some hormones like human placental lactogen, estrogen and hormones that increase insulin resistance.

These hormones affect your placenta and also interfere with the action of insulin, the hormone that regulates your blood sugar.

Women over the age of 25 who suffer from high blood pressure, have a family history of diabetes and were overweight before becoming pregnant are at a higher risk of developing gestational diabetes.



Eat a Healthy Breakfast



Eat the Right Carbohydrates



Monitor Blood Sugar Level Regularly



Opt for a Sugar-Free Diet



Take Prescribed Medicines as Directed



Drink Cinnamon Tea



Sleep Well

PLANNING A 3 PERSON BABY

What you need to know when going for surrogate mother



HUSBAND'S SPERM

Or from Sperm Donor



WIFE'S EGG

Or from Egg Donor



EMBRYO

Embryo is put inside a lady called Surrogate

There's still some controversy about using a surrogate mother to have a baby. The legal process is also tricky because it varies from state to state. Even so, whether it's because of fertility problems or other reasons, surrogacy is an option for you and your partner.

What is a Surrogate Mother?

There are two kinds:

Traditional surrogate: It's a woman who gets artificially inseminated with the father's sperm. She then carries the baby and delivers it for you and your partner to raise.

A traditional surrogate is the baby's biological mother. That's because it was her egg that was fertilized by the father's sperm. Donor sperm can also be used.

Gestational surrogate: A technique called 'In Vitro

Fertilization' (IVF) now makes it possible to gather eggs from the mother, fertilize them with sperm from the father, and place the embryo into the uterus of a gestational surrogate.

The surrogate then carries the baby until birth. She doesn't have any genetic ties to the child because it wasn't her egg that was used. A gestational surrogate is called the 'birth mother'. The biological mother, though, is still the woman whose egg was fertilized.

Who uses Surrogate?

If you're a woman, you may consider a surrogate for several reasons:

- Medical problems with your uterus
- Had a hysterectomy that removed your uterus
- Conditions that make pregnancy impossible or risky for you, such as severe heart disease

You may want to think about surrogacy if you tried but could not get pregnant with a variety of assisted-reproduction techniques, such as IVF.

Surrogates have also made parenthood an option for people who might not be able to adopt a child, perhaps because of their age or marital status

Finding a Surrogate

Ways to find a surrogate mother:

Friends or Family: Sometimes you can ask a friend or relative to be a surrogate for you. It's somewhat controversial. But because of the high cost of surrogacy and the complex legal issues it raises about parental rights, a tried-and-tested family relationship can be simpler to manage.

A surrogacy agency: Most people use one to arrange a gestational surrogate.

An agency helps you find a surrogate and make arrangements. It also collects any fees that get passed between you and the surrogate, such as paying for her medical expenses.

How to choose a Surrogate

Right now there aren't any regulations about who can be a surrogate mother. But experts agree on a few points about how to select one.

You should choose a surrogate who:

- Is at least 21 years old
- Has already given birth to at least one healthy baby so she understands firsthand the medical risks of pregnancy and childbirth and the emotional issues of bonding with a newborn
- Has passed a psychological screening by a mental health professional to uncover any issues with giving up the baby after birth
- Signs a contract about her role and responsibilities in the pregnancy, such as prenatal care and agreeing to give you the baby after birth

Using a Surrogate

Surrogates should get tests to make sure they have immunity to measles, rubella (German measles) and chicken pox. Also, you may want to ask that she get a medical procedure to visually "map" the uterus, which can help the doctor check her potential to carry a pregnancy. A surrogate mother should have her own doctor during pregnancy rather than use yours.

To protect your rights as parents-to-be and the rights of

the child you're hoping to have, hire a lawyer who specialises in reproductive law in your state. They can write a surrogacy contract that clearly spells out what everyone needs to do.

A contract like that may help if legal issues come up after birth. It can also outline agreements about a variety of possible scenarios with the pregnancy, such as what happens if there are twins or triplets.



WORKOUTS THAT GET A GREEN LIGHT DURING PREGNANCY!

Worried about the potential risks of working out while pregnant? Here are the best and safest ways to break a sweat while you're expecting.

During pregnancy, exercise works wonders for both you and your baby. While it's true that now isn't the time to learn water ski or enter a horse-jumping competition; as long as you get the green light from your practitioner to work out, you can enjoy a majority of fitness activities.

Swimming and water aerobics may just be the perfect pregnancy workout. In the water you weigh a tenth of what you do on land, so you'll feel lighter and more limber. A dip in the pool may also help relieve nausea, sciatic pain, puffy ankles and because baby's floating along with you, it's gentle on your loosening joints and ligaments.

SWIMMING



There's no easier exercise to fit into your busy schedule than walking and it's a workout you can continue to fit in right up until delivery date. What's more, you don't need any special equipment or a gym membership to participate, just some good sneakers. If you opt for a hike, be sure to avoid uneven terrain (*especially later in pregnancy, when your belly can block your view of that rock in your path*), high altitudes and slippery conditions.

BRISK WALKING



A wonderful way to break a sweat without putting pressure on your ankle and knee joints is indoor cycling as it lets you pedal at your own pace without the risk of falling. Try transitioning your cardio workouts to a stationary bike or hop into an indoor cycling class for a more structured ride. Just make sure your instructor knows you're expecting and feel free to sit out sprints and hills if you feel overheated or exhausted at any point.

INDOOR CYCLING



Low-impact aerobics is a great way to increase your heart rate and get the endorphins flowing if you're a newbie exerciser. As your abdomen expands, avoid any activities that require careful balance. If you're an experienced athlete, just be sure to listen to your body and never exercise to the point of exhaustion.

AEROBICS



Pre-natal yoga is also great as it encourages relaxation, flexibility, focus and deep breathing; all required for the marathon of pregnancy.

PRENATAL YOGA



PILATES



A pregnancy appropriate pilates routine focuses mainly on strengthening your core and lengthening your muscles. This will help ease backaches and improve your posture, as your belly gets bigger, as well as your flexibility, which comes in handy during labour.

STAY MOTIVATED

and always confirm with your practitioner what's okay and what's not for you!

GADGETS FOR THOSE 9 MONTHS!

From practical to the peculiar, here's a list of gadgets that will help you through the next nine months to make your pregnancy more enjoyable.

baby daze™



Pregnancy often causes sleepless nights and for some it's just downright uncomfortable. It happens as a result of anxiety about the next day's to-do list or questions that you should ask a doctor.

In such a case, you should opt for 'baby daze' which has a lighted pen and log book for expectant or new, sleep-deprived moms, allowing them to write down anything that's lingering in their minds in the middle of the night. The eight-section organizer has pertinent sections with worksheets. So, instead of lying awake thinking all night, you can jot it down and get some much-needed rest.

Website: www.babydaze.net

bellybuds



Why should you have all the fun rocking out to your favorite tunes and not share it with your baby? Studies have shown that babies can remember music that was played to them in the womb for up to a year after birth and that was the motivating force behind 'bellybuds'.

It is compatible with an iPod and other music players; have adhesive rings that stick to the belly; a splitter that connects mom to the same music, and a 'fixed-safe' maximum volume that's smooth on the baby. They also fit comfortably under clothing. So from Mozart to Beethoven, you and your baby can share a dance.

Website: www.bellybuds.com



kickTrak

Out of a number of ways to monitor your baby's well-being during pregnancy without the help of a doctor, counting their kicks is the one that's recommended by the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Some women choose to do this on their own, but the gadget-lovers out there can use kickTrack, a device that counts and times movements and keeps a log. It also serves as a pregnancy counter for the last 99 days and can be used to time contractions when labor begins.

Website: www.babykick.com



Babycare TENS

Looking for ways to eliminate or reduce pain during labor? The Elle Tens Machine, used frequently in the U.K., claims to be your answer. Its electrode pads are strapped on to your back and connected to a device about the size of a television remote. When contractions strike, you push a button that delivers small electrical pulses, said to stimulate the muscles and nerves thereby combating the back pain associated with labor.

The key here is to practice with settings ahead of time to ensure the proper zap and to discuss this gadget with your doctor before you purchase or rent one. Many positive online reviews indicate that, if nothing else, the small vibrations can serve as a stimulating focal point during labor.

www.babycaretens.com



BioBands
BIOBANDS.COM

Having trouble keeping breakfast down or eating at all during the early stages of pregnancy? Up to 80% of pregnant women suffer from some form of morning sicknesses, ranging from nausea to lunch-losing moments throughout the day.

Come, Bio Band - a drug and chemical-free wristband that uses pressure points (acupressure) on the wrist that are said to relieve nausea. Studies have shown that these types of motion sickness gadgets can be effective and for those who are really suffering, the inexpensive Bio Bands are probably worth a try.

www.biobands.com





Get your omega-3 fatty acids

A diet rich in omega-3 fatty acids can boost your baby's brain and neurological development before birth thereby leading to better vision, memory and language comprehension in early childhood. It may also reduce your risk of post-partum depression. Flaxseed oil, walnuts and omega-3 fortified eggs are good sources of ALA, one of the three omega-3 fats, but fatty fish is the only reliable source of the two more important omega-3s. The trick is to choose fish that are high in omega-3s but low in mercury which can harm a foetus's nervous system.



Load up on the 'Big 5' nutrients: Folate, Calcium, Iron, Zinc & Fiber

Before conception and in the first six weeks of pregnancy, Folate is very vital (the synthetic form is folic acid). This B vitamin can reduce the risk of neural-tube defects such as spina bifida by a whopping 70%.



Don't forget to drink at least 12 8-ounce glasses of fluid a day

It's hard to stay hydrated when you're pregnant because a lot of fluid you drink leaks from your blood vessels into your tissues. Yet hydration is essential for preventing pre-term labor because when you're short on fluids, the body makes a hormone that stimulates contractions. It also helps prevent headaches, kidney stones, dizziness and common pregnancy complaints such as constipation and hemorrhoids. You know you're well hydrated when your urine is light yellow to clear.



Don't eat for two

Nearly half of all women gain too much weight during pregnancy, that's up from 37% in 1993. In these cases, the babies have a higher risk of obesity later in life, plus, the mothers tend to retain extra weight after giving birth. It's crucial to base your pregnancy weight-gain goal on your height and pre-pregnancy weight.



Choose organic and locally grown foods

Research has connected pesticides in the water supply to premature births and possibly birth defects. Washing the fruits and vegetables may not be enough as some of them contain highest pesticide concentrations, especially those with thin skins like peach, apple, bell pepper, strawberry etc. Hence, opt for organic foods whenever possible.



Have double duty foods

Consume nutrient dense foods such as yogurt, peanut butter, chicken, beef, eggs and dairy products which have good amount of protein, calcium and iron. Some others like lean pork, beef, contains protein, along with B vitamins, iron and zinc; orange juice offers folate plus vitamin C, which helps you absorb iron from foods such as fiber-rich black beans and spinach; whole grains are filled with fiber, B vitamins, magnesium and zinc.



Eat a rainbow of foods

A varied diet provides you with an eclectic mix and introduces your little one to new tastes via the amniotic fluid. Even bananas and saltines mostly consumed in the first trimester are beneficial too. Deep-hued fruits and vegetables such as blueberry, carrot, and spinach tend to be richest in antioxidants.

Nutrition during pregnancy

5 DO'S AND DON'TS



Don't overlook food safety

Avoid raw or undercooked meat, poultry, seafood, eggs and also leftover food that's been out for more than two hours as it may contain harmful bacteria like E. Coli, Salmonella and Listeria. Also, stick a thermometer in your refrigerator to make sure the temperature is below 40 degrees, cold enough to stop bacteria from growing.



Don't go more than two to three hours without eating

Grazing not only pumps a steady stream of nutrients to your baby, it also keeps your blood sugar levels steady so you don't crash or become lightheaded. Smaller meals minimize heartburn, a common and painful problem as pregnancy progresses and your stomach gets squeezed.



Don't overdose on refined carbs

White bread, white rice, sweets and sodas rush into your bloodstream spiking your blood glucose levels which may result in fatter newborns. If you consume the same number of calories but just change what you eat, your baby may have less body fat at birth and a lower risk of future obesity. Limit the white stuff and choose unrefined grains such as oatmeal, brown rice, quinoa, whole-wheat tortillas and bread.

Being pregnant is hard work. Growing a baby can mean morning sickness, swelling, mood swings, backaches and a host of other discomforts which means you're more than deserving of a little splurge here and there. Here are 10 wonderful ways to pamper your pregnant body while you're expecting!

Get a pregnancy massage

Massages may not be part of your regular pampering routine but the aches, pains and stress of pregnancy makes it easy to justify the occasional pre-natal massage. When you book your appointment, tell the masseuse that you're pregnant so she can give you an appropriate and ultra relaxing massage.

Spare no expense for exercise

Part of the birth plan this time around is staying fit. Splurging on group exercise classes and purchasing new prenatal exercise DVDs to do at home will help you keep motivated. Pamper yourself by keeping your health a priority.

Indulge in a pedicure

You may not be able to even see your toes, but nothing will help melt away those aches and pains like a little TLC for your aching, swollen feet.

Go to bed early

It's hard to resist the temptation to stay up past your bedtime to tackle your to-do list, especially if you have other kids at home who keep you busy with nursery or other projects. With this pregnancy, however, you have to take a more kind approach to what your body needs.

Pampering yourself

for those 9 months

10
wonder
ways



ful



Hire a housekeeper

You know those last few weeks, when all you want to do is to keep everything organised, but find it difficult to do so. Hence, consider hiring a housekeeper just once for proper cleaning before delivery. Wouldn't it be nice to save up your energy for the birth and know you'll come home to a clean house?

Give yourself a break

Consider pregnancy and year one of being a mom (*first time or repeat*) as times of survival, and instead of beating yourself up about things, enjoy a few more take-out dinners or snuggles with the kids while they watch their favourite movie.

Experiment with food

Pregnancy makes food taste so much better. The juicy suppleness of an orange, the cheesy tang of fresh pepperoni pizza or the crisp chewiness of a brownie right out of the oven can be a delight to the pregnant senses.

Enjoy a weekend nap

And while we're on the subject of sleep, can we talk about how deliciously indulgent a weekend nap can feel? Take this opportunity to indulge in a few extra snores before your baby leaves you feeling sleep deprived.

Buy a new e-reader

Sleepless nights and the feedings to come mean primarily one thing, an excuse to indulge in mindless reading. Hence, flipping through an e-reader with one hand is the perfect solution. Start browsing now and enjoy some pre-delivery reading as well.

PREGNANT? Steer clear from these health hazards

Some infections before and during pregnancy can hurt both you and your developing foetus. They can cause serious illness, birth defects and lifelong disabilities such as hearing loss or learning problems.

Here are 5 tips to help prevent infections before and during pregnancy:



Protect yourself from Zika virus

Zika virus can be passed from a pregnant woman to her foetus during pregnancy or to her baby around the time of birth. It can cause microcephaly, a birth defect where a baby's head and brain are smaller than babies of the same age and sex and other severe brain defects. If you are pregnant, do not travel to areas with Zika. If you must travel to an area with Zika, talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider first and strictly follow steps to prevent mosquito bites during the trip.

Avoid unpasteurised (raw) milk and foods made from it

Do not eat soft cheese such as feta, brie and queso fresco, unless they have labels that say they are pasteurised. Unpasteurised products can contain harmful bacteria.



Stay away from wild or pet rodents and their droppings

Have a pest control professional get rid of pests in or around your home. If you have a pet rodent, like a hamster or guinea pig, have someone else care for it until after your baby arrives. Some rodents might carry harmful viruses.

Get tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV and Hepatitis B and protect yourself from them

Some people who have HIV, Hepatitis B or an STD do not feel sick and hence knowing if you have one of these diseases is important. If you do, talk to your healthcare provider about reducing the chance that your baby will become sick.



Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations

Some vaccinations are recommended before you become pregnant, during pregnancy or right after delivery. Having the right vaccinations at the right time can help keep you healthy and help keep your baby from getting very sick or having life-long health problems.


These tips can help you prevent infections that could harm you and your developing baby. You will not always know if you have an infection and sometimes you will not feel sick. If you think you might have an infection or think you are at risk, see your healthcare provider. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider to learn more about safe food preparation, wearing insect repellent when outside, taking medicine and other important topics.



What you need to know about “Cesarean Section”

No matter what type of birth you're planning for, you shouldn't rule out the possibility of a Cesarean Section. While its delivery rate declined in the past few years, from 32.9% in 2009 to 32.8% in 2010, the ratio in the United States is still 1 out of every 3 births. Out of these, about 61% are first-time surgeries, mainly C-section performed when problems arise during labor. In short, knowing how to prepare for and personalise a C-section can make the surgery less traumatic and help speed recovery.

Start preparing now



If you want to avoid a C-Section or make the surgery as simple as possible, pay attention to your weight early on. At home, prepare a comfortable nest for yourself and your newborn with diapering supplies, snacks, water, a breastfeeding pillow and your phone, all within easy reach.

Wearing a postpartum support belt can help reduce strain on your abdominal muscles, like when moving to the edge of the bed or chair or using your hands to push yourself up. If you live in a two-storey house, keep essentials on both the floors to minimise stair climbing. Also, don't drive for at least two weeks after your surgery.


When you're packing your hospital bag, adding a few extra items can improve your stay, in case you have a C-section.

Ask for what you want

Knowing in advance what to request from hospital staff can help minimise the emotionally upsetting aspects of having a C-section. Many women worry that the surgery will require them to be separated from their newborns. Yet unless the baby or mother needs immediate medical treatment, most hospitals will accommodate parents' expressed wishes for early bonding opportunities.



Tips for a better recovery



If there is one piece of advice consistently given by women who've had a C-section, it's this. Take all the pain medication your doctor recommends, take it on schedule and don't wait until the pain becomes unbearable. Walking as soon as one day after your C-section, can help prevent blood clots, speed bowel recovery and boost your comfort level.

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