



Special Considerations for the Pregnant Woman

Caffeine

The March of Dimes recommends that women who are pregnant consume no more than 200 mg of caffeine per day. This is equivalent to four cups of coffee or four soft drinks per day. The Organization of Teratology Information Specialists www.OTISpregnancy.org states that caffeine has not been shown to cause an increased chance for birth defects. Caffeine crosses the placenta and in large quantities can affect babies in the same way as it does adults.

Alcohol

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the leading known cause of mental retardation. It is preventable. Please DO NOT drink during your pregnancy or use any illicit drugs such as amphetamines, cocaine, marijuana, or hallucinogenic drugs. There is no known safe amount of alcohol use in pregnancy.

Herbal Supplements

We do not recommend any herbal supplements during pregnancy. Most have not been studied so no safety record is available. If you are taking a supplement, please bring it to your appointment and discuss its use with your physician.

DHA and Omega-3 Supplements

Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) is an omega-3 fatty acid. It is found in cold-water fatty fish and fish oil supplements, along with eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA). Vegetarian sources of DHA come from seaweed. Because omega-3 fatty acids are needed for brain development, research is being done to see if DHA may prevent Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children. At this time, there is no proven benefit for pregnant women to take fish oil supplements. Supplements can cause a prolonged bleeding time, interaction with other medications and may have side effects (loose stools, abdominal discomfort and belching). Additionally, it is recommended that pregnant women avoid eating fatty fish due to the mercury content in fish.

Smoking

Smoking while pregnant increases the incidence of low birth weight babies, placental abruption, miscarriage, and pre-term labor. It also increases your baby's risk for future ear infections, frequent colds and SIDS. Please do not smoke during your pregnancy. Call the American Cancer Society for information on quitting (800) 662-8887.

Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis is a parasite that is sometimes found in birds. If you have a cat that catches and eats birds and uses an indoor litter box, feces from the cat may contain toxoplasmosis. This can be harmful to a developing fetus if inhaled. Please have someone else change the litter box.

Dental Exams

Local anesthesia injections are safe. Use a lead apron if X-rays are necessary. Pain medications and most antibiotics are safe (your dentist will prescribe correctly). Dentists commonly use Lidocaine and Ampicillin for dental procedures.

Hot Tubs and Saunas

Studies have shown that there is an increased incidence of miscarriage if a sauna is used during the first three months of pregnancy. We recommend against using the sauna during the entire pregnancy and not using a hot tub during the first three months of pregnancy. After the first three months of pregnancy, limit the hot tub to 100 degrees temperature. The danger to the fetus appears to be from raising the mother's core body temperature. Warm baths and showers are safe throughout pregnancy.

Vaccinations

The Tdap (Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) vaccine is recommended for all adults in contact with newborns and toddlers under the age of one to prevent transmission of pertussis, also known as whooping cough. If you have not already received this vaccine, you may receive it during the second or third trimester of pregnancy. If you have not received it during pregnancy, the hospital will offer it after delivery. The Flu shot is recommended for all women who will be pregnant during the flu season. The H1N1 vaccine is recommended for all pregnant women. The most up-to-date information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/pregnancy/>. Vaccines are available in the Vaccination Clinic in Suite 2 of the Los Olivos building by appointment (408) 356-9500. A doctor's prescription is required. Family members can also schedule appointments in the Vaccination Clinic.

Food Handling

Tips for preventing food borne illnesses can be found on the FDA website at www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/qa-topfd.html. Use the same precautions when you are pregnant that you normally use for food preparation and storage. Soft cheeses are safe as long as they are pasteurized. Deli meats should only be consumed if fresh. Cooking food destroys bacteria and parasites.

Processed Foods and Plastic Bottles

Minimize your exposure to processed foods. Ham and bacon contain sodium nitrate, which may be harmful in large quantities. Plastic bottles may contain Bisphenol A (BPA), a synthetic chemical that interferes with the body's natural hormonal messaging system. Health advocates also recommend not reusing bottles made from plastic #1 (polyethylene terephthalate, also known as PET or PETE), including most disposable water, soda and juice bottles. Such bottles may be safe for one-time use, but reuse should be avoided because studies indicate they may leach DEHP—another probable human carcinogen—when they are in less-than-perfect condition. Use BPA free water bottles. Do not microwave food in plastic containers. Use only glass or ceramic dishes in the microwave oven.