

Frequently Asked Questions

What medications are safe to take during pregnancy?

Medications cross the placenta and enter the baby's bloodstream. Be sure to mention anything you are taking or have taken earlier in your pregnancy. Refer to our "**Safe Medications**" handout for a list of over-the-counter medications.

Is it safe to travel during pregnancy?

Travel by air in commercial aircraft can be unrestricted until you are close to delivery. After 36-38 weeks, it is more prudent to stay close to home unless there are extenuating circumstances. Most airlines will refuse you passage in your last month unless you have a note from your doctor. If traveling after 32 weeks, you may want to have a cervical check done during the week before you go.

During a car trip, try to limit driving to no more than 5 to 6 hours per day. Stop every couple of hours to walk and move around. Always wear both the lap and shoulder belt. Buckle the lap belt low on your hip bones, below your belly; never put the lap belt across your belly.

Can I have dental work?

A dental exam early in pregnancy will help ensure your mouth stays healthy. When you visit the dentist, let them know you are pregnant. Dental x-rays with abdominal shielding and Novocain are safe in pregnancy. Most dental offices require a release from your physician; please let us know at least one week in advance of an upcoming appointment so we may provide the appropriate release.

When will I feel my baby move?

Most women feel movement between 16 & 20 weeks of pregnancy. During the second half of pregnancy, your baby's movements will become stronger and more active. If you notice any change in your baby's movement, be sure to let us know right away.

Is it safe to paint?

Avoid exposure to lead and oil-based paints. If you paint, use only latex paint in a well-ventilated area. Avoid exposure to paint removers, thinners and paint brush cleaning solution.

Can I have my hair colored, permed, or straightened?

Hair processing such as coloring, perms and straightening are found to be safe during pregnancy.

Are hot tubs, baths and saunas safe?

A warm bath can be a safe and relaxing treat during pregnancy. But, it is not safe for you to become overheated in a hot tub, very hot bath, or sauna. We recommend avoiding these activities during your pregnancy.

Can I have caffeine?

Caffeine is found in coffee, cola, energy drinks, soft drinks, teas, and chocolate. At this time, there is no proof that small amounts of caffeine are harmful to the fetus. We recommend limiting your caffeine intake to one or two (6 oz) caffeine drinks per day.

Is cigarette smoke harmful to my unborn baby?

Yes, if a woman smokes during pregnancy, her baby is exposed to harmful chemicals such as tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide. Smoking also increases the risk of miscarriage, still birth, a low birth weight baby, SIDS, and the likelihood of health problems during infancy. We strongly recommend that you quit smoking and avoid exposure to second hand smoke.

Can I drink alcohol?

No, alcohol can harm your baby's health. When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, it quickly reaches her fetus. The same amount of alcohol that's in her blood is in her baby's blood. Drinking alcohol at any time during pregnancy can cause problems for your unborn baby. The more a pregnant woman drinks, the greater the danger to her baby. Alcohol also increases the risk of miscarriage or a preterm delivery.

I have been exposed to Fifth disease (Parvovirus.) Should I be concerned?

Usually, there is no serious complication for a pregnant woman or her baby because of exposure to a person with fifth disease. About 50% of women are already immune, and these women and their babies are protected from infection and illness. Sometimes, however, the virus can cause a miscarriage in early pregnancy or severe anemia in the fetus if later in pregnancy. There is no evidence that fifth disease causes birth defects or mental retardation.

If you have been in contact with someone who has fifth disease, or if you have an illness that might be caused by parvovirus, please contact us right away so we can determine if blood tests are needed.

Should I have genetic counseling and/or testing?

If you are 35 years of age or over at the time of delivery, or if you have a family history of birth defects, mental retardation, or certain medical conditions, we offer genetic counseling and genetic testing. Your physician can give you more information regarding these tests.

What is a Quad Screen?

This maternal blood test screens for Open Neural Tube Defects, such as spina bifida. It also gives information about the risk of Down's syndrome. Screening is recommended between 15-18 weeks gestation. Remember, this is only a screening tool, if the results are positive, further diagnostic testing may be indicated.

When will I have an ultrasound?

A routine ultrasound between 18-20 weeks is performed to make sure your baby is growing as it should, confirm your estimated due date, screen for fetal abnormalities, evaluate the position of the placenta, determine the amount of amniotic fluid, see if you are carrying more than one baby, and check for openings or shortening of the cervix. Sometimes it is possible to see the sex of the baby and sometimes it is not. If your baby is lying in an inconvenient position, the baby's sex cannot be determined.

In many cases, women need only one ultrasound examination, but for a variety of medical reasons, your doctor may order additional scans during your pregnancy.

Are vaccines safe during pregnancy?

The flu vaccine is one that is proven to be safe during pregnancy. We strongly recommend that all women who will be pregnant during flu season (November-March) receive a flu vaccine. Vaccines to avoid are: MMR, chicken pox, and Lyme disease. Talk to your doctor before receiving any other type of vaccinations.

Can I videotape the birth of my baby?

It is our policy not to allow video cameras of any sort in the delivery room. Cameras taking still photos may be used unless directed otherwise by the physician.

What do I do in an emergency?

A physician is on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. During regular office hours, please contact our office. After hours, our answering service will put you in contact with our on-call physician. **If your line does not receive anonymous calls, you must dial *87 in order to receive a return call from the physician.**

Is it safe to have sex?

Unless otherwise instructed, you may continue to have intercourse until the onset of labor. Do not have intercourse if you have vaginal bleeding, if your bag of water breaks or if you are being treated for premature labor.

What can I do to prevent stretch marks?

Stretch marks may appear on the belly, thighs, and breasts, and no lotions or creams prevent them.

Will I deliver on my due date?

The duration of the average pregnancy is 40 weeks (280 days). The emphasis is on the word "average". Only about 4% of all women will actually deliver on their "due date". However, over 90% will deliver within two weeks of that due date. If you should go more than one week past your due date, other tests may be performed. If this situation arises, we will discuss it further at that time.

When should I take maternity leave?

You may continue your employment as long as you wish. Some women feel too tired and uncomfortable by the 38th week to carry on full-time employment. If you think you have an unusual occupation that may adversely affect your pregnancy, bring it to our attention early. Please check with your employer regarding your maternity leave benefits. Many women take advantage of the 12 weeks of unpaid leave allowed by the Family/Medical Leave Act.

Should I take a childbirth class?

We encourage you and your spouse or labor support person to enroll in a childbirth class. Information is available in our office about locations and times of classes.

What are the fees for obstetrical care?

The fee schedule for obstetrical care will be discussed with you early in your pregnancy with Patient Account Representatives in our office. Also remember the hospital and pediatrician has a separate set of fees.

How much weight should I gain?

If you are the appropriate weight for your height and body build, you should gain between 25-35 pounds. During the first 12-14 weeks of pregnancy, you should gain no more than 2-4 lbs; thereafter, you should gain ½ to 1 lb per week.

Is it safe to exercise?

We are frequently asked about exercise in pregnancy. For the mother, exercise has excellent physical and emotional benefits. Exercise will help you remain healthy and feeling your best while your body rapidly changes. It can also help prepare you for labor and delivery. Women at high risk for premature labor, growth restriction (decreased blood supply to the placenta), or other high risk conditions should not exercise and will be reminded of this by their provider. Women who were in good shape prior to pregnancy may continue to work out at their previous levels. It is also rare for a fit woman to overheat while exercising. Based on this information, the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommends:

Continue mild to moderate exercise. Regular exercise (at least three times per week) is preferable to intermittent exercise.

Avoid exercise lying directly on your back after 12 weeks.

When exercising, make sure you drink lots of water and modify your exercise by how **you** feel.

Exercise Generally Considered Safe in Pregnancy includes:

- ❑ Low Impact Aerobics/Pregnancy Fitness Classes
- ❑ Cycling/Stationary Bike
- ❑ Jogging, Walking or a Day Hike
- ❑ Cross Country Skiing (under 20 weeks)
- ❑ Non-competitive Racket Sports/Golf
- ❑ Swimming/Water Aerobics
- ❑ Weight Training (avoid excessive straining)

Special Tests for Pregnant Mothers and Their Babies

Cystic Fibrosis

Women's Care offers an optional screening test for cystic fibrosis, the most common inherited disorder among Caucasians. The lungs and digestive system are primarily affected leading to chronic lung infections and problems with growth and weight gain. There have been many advances in the medical treatment of cystic fibrosis, but there is no cure. The average life expectancy for someone with cystic fibrosis is approximately 30 years, and the cause of death is usually the result of lung failure. Cystic fibrosis is a recessive condition, which means that both you and your partner have to carry a gene mutation in order to have a child with cystic fibrosis.

The likelihood that you carry a gene mutation for cystic fibrosis is:

- 1 in 29 for Caucasians and Ashkenazi Jews
- 1 in 46 for Hispanic Americans
- 1 in 65 for African Americans
- 1 in 90 for Asian Americans

The chance that you would have a child with cystic fibrosis is approximately:

- 1 in 3,300 for Caucasians and Ashkenazi Jews
- 1 in 8,000 for Hispanic
- 1 in 15,000 for African Americans
- 1 in 32,000 for Asian Americans

The screening test involves a blood draw that would first be done on the pregnant woman. If she is found to carry a gene mutation, we will then test her partner. If you are both found to be cystic fibrosis carriers, you may be referred for genetic counseling.

The percentages for detection are approximately:

- 90% of mutations for Caucasians
- 97% of mutations for Ashkenazi Jews
- 57% for Hispanic Americans
- 75% for African Americans

The cystic fibrosis screening results are reported as a likelihood of you being a gene mutation carrier. Please understand that this screen will not pick up all carriers of a cystic fibrosis mutation. While a negative cystic fibrosis screen does not guarantee a baby free of cystic fibrosis, it does indicate the likelihood is very small.

Quad Screen

What is the Quad Screen?

It is a blood test offered to pregnant women to screen for birth defects before the baby is born. Four substances are normally present in pregnant women. Alpha-fetoprotein (AFP), unconjugated estriol (uE3), and inhibin-A (inhibin), are passed from the baby's bloodstream through the placenta to the mother's bloodstream. Human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG) is normally produced by a pregnant woman in response to a pregnancy.

What birth defects are screened for with this test?

Neural Tube Defects (NTD): These are defects in the baby's spine or skull. Babies that have NTD often have a higher than usual amount of AFP detected in the mother's blood. If the defect is an opening in the bones of the spine it is called SPINA BIFIDA (spy-na-biff-id-ah). Most infants born with spina bifida will have some problems: weak or paralyzed legs, problems with bladder and bowel control, bladder and kidney infections, and sometimes mental retardation. Surgery after birth can close many of the openings, but nerve damage that has already occurred is currently not repairable. If the opening is in the skull, the brain does not form properly. This condition is called ANENCEPHALY (an-en-sef-a-lee). Babies with anencephaly die before or soon after birth.

Down Syndrome: Down syndrome is a medical condition that causes a child to have some degree of mental retardation and often birth defects involving the heart or other systems. Babies that have Down syndrome often have a lower than usual amount of AFP and uE3 and a higher amount of HCG detected in the mother's blood. Babies with Down syndrome have an extra chromosome in each of the cells of the body. Chromosomes are packages of genes that control how our bodies function. That extra chromosome is usually present at the time of conception. Often, there is no family history of Down syndrome. This is because the extra chromosome is an accident that happens as the egg or sperm is maturing and preparing for conception.

Abdominal Wall Defects: These are openings in the baby's abdomen. Intestines and sometimes other organs are on the outside of the body. Surgery after birth can correct this problem for many babies. Babies with abdominal wall defects have a higher than usual amount of AFP detected in the mother's blood.

What does an abnormal screening test mean?

Since this is only a screening test, it will not specifically diagnose the defect. An abnormal result could indicate that:

1. Your baby may be at increased risk for one of the above birth defects
2. Your due date may be incorrect
3. You have a twin pregnancy.

Does a normal screening test mean my baby is normal?

With this screening test we can detect approximately 90% of babies with NTD and 65% of babies with Down syndrome. This means that a normal result does not guarantee the absence of birth defects but it does offer great reassurance. Since the risk of having a child with Down syndrome increases with the mother's age, it is still recommended that women 35 years or older at the time of delivery consider more extensive testing (i.e. amniocentesis).

How and when will I get the test results?

The quad screen is performed three times a week at Oregon Medical Laboratories and your physician will be notified of the test results. He or she will interpret your test results and recommend further testing should it be required.

What happens if my test results are abnormal?

Your physician will consult with you and advise you about additional testing that may be recommended. If further testing is indicated, the services are available in our community.

Nonstress Test

Some women have a risk of having problems during pregnancy due to a medical condition and need closer monitoring. The nonstress test is one method of fetal monitoring to check the growth and health of your baby. Some of the conditions that may signal a need for a nonstress test include:

- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Twin pregnancy
- Post-dates (pregnancy lasting more than 2 weeks past your due date)
- Kidney or heart disease
- Fetal growth problems

The nonstress test measures the fetal heart rate in response to your baby's own movements. Often the fetal heart rate increases when your baby moves, just as yours does when you exercise. Such changes in your baby's heart rate are an indicator of fetal well-being.

During the nonstress test, you will lie on an exam table or seated in a recliner with belts around your abdomen. The belts are attached to ultrasound transducers. Your baby's heart rate is measured by Doppler ultrasound. You will push a button each time you feel your baby move. This causes a tracing to be made on a paper that is recording your baby's heart rate.

If your baby does not move for a while during the nonstress test, your baby may be asleep. A hand-held buzzer may be used by the physician or nurse to produce sound and vibration to wake your baby and cause movement.

This is harmless to your baby and will not cause you any discomfort. We also may suggest that you have something to eat or drink to stimulate your baby's movements.

Your physician will discuss the nonstress tests results with you and will determine if further testing is needed.