

8 TIPS FOR A HEALTHY PREGNANCY

Previously a paediatrician in both India and the UK, DR CHARU NARAYANAN is one of the team of GPs at **Complete Healthcare International (CHI)**. Though a healthy pregnancy is determined by a healthy egg and sperm, she says, there's a lot you can do to optimise your baby's health and your own.

1 Eat sensibly

- Follow a **balanced** diet that contains all the important food groups: fruit, vegetables including leafy types, complex carbohydrates, protein sources (eggs, lean meat, poultry, nuts and seeds, pulses) along with some fats and oils.
- Observing **food hygiene** during preparation, by washing fruit and vegetables and cooking eggs, meat and chicken well before you eat them, will reduce the risk of food poisoning.
- Stay away from **sugary and fried foods!** – their empty calories contribute to unnecessary weight gain and increase the risk of gestational diabetes.
- Avoid fish with a high mercury content, such as shark and swordfish, and limit tuna to about four cans a week or two 170g portions (raw weight).
- Stick with **hard cheeses** and avoid any unpasteurised dairy products or pâté, which can harbour listeriosis, a bacterium that causes food poisoning.

2 Move

Regular exercise of moderate intensity – like brisk walking, swimming, yoga and Pilates – brings all the benefits that come with improved mood, sleep and circulation. What's more, through helping to control weight, exercise has a role in preventing and managing conditions such as gestational diabetes and hypertension and reducing the risk of a Caesarean birth. Do what feels comfortable for you! – but do consult your doctor if you have a specific health condition or it has been a complicated pregnancy.

3 Sleep

Put your feet up in the day to rest fatigued legs and relieve swollen ankles. Allow yourself at least eight hours sleep at night.

4 Caffeine

Up to 200mg a day is considered safe. Your Starbucks tall latte or cappuccino contains 150mg, a mug of instant contains 100mg and a cup of tea has about 75mg. Smaller amounts are found in chocolate (about 21mg in 50g of dark chocolate) and in cola drinks (about 24mg per can).

5 Smoking and alcohol

Avoid both completely. Smoking – including passive smoking – affects the foetal development and can trigger premature birth. Alcohol, too, has been linked to developmental abnormalities and low birth weight.


6 Prenatal vitamins

Take a daily prenatal supplement. Apart from a variety of important vitamins and minerals, including iron, iodine and calcium, it should contain 400mcg of valuable folate (also known as vitamin B9, or folic acid in its synthetic form) to support healthy nerve and spinal cord development in the baby.

7 Medication

Discuss any medication with a doctor. For occasional pain relief, paracetamol is considered safe.

8 Accident prevention

Listen to your body when exercising – ligament injury occurs easily in pregnancy, due to hormone-induced laxity. The knees and hips also have to bear a much greater burden, and backache is commoner. When driving, secure your seatbelt properly, placing the lap belt under the bump and across the upper thighs. 

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