Do’s and Don’ts in Pregnancy

# Pregnancy

### The state of carrying a developing embryo or fetus within the female body. This condition can be indicated by positive results on an over-the-counter urine test, and confirmed through a blood test, ultrasound, detection of fetal heartbeat. Pregnancy lasts for about nine months, measured from the date of the woman's last menstrual period (LMP). It is conventionally divided into three trimesters, each roughly three months long.

### First Trimester (0 to 13 Weeks)

The first trimester is the most crucial to your baby's development. During this period, your baby's body structure and organ systems develop. Most miscarriages and birth defects occur during this period.

Your body also undergoes major changes during the first trimester. These changes often cause a variety of symptoms, including nausea, fatigue, breast tenderness and frequent urination.

### Second Trimester (14 to 26 Weeks)

The second trimester of pregnancy is often called the "golden period" because many of the unpleasant effects of early pregnancy disappear. During the second trimester, you're likely to experience decreased nausea, better sleep patterns and an increased energy level. However, you may experience a whole new set of symptoms, such as back pain, abdominal pain, leg cramps, constipation and heartburn.

### Third Trimester (27 to 40 Weeks)

You have now reached your final stretch of pregnancy and are probably very excited and anxious for the birth of your baby. Some of the physical symptoms you may experience during this period include shortness of breath, pain while passing stool, unable to hold urine, swelling of large veins of leg and sleeping problems. Many of these symptoms arise from the increase in the size of your uterus, which expands from approximately 50-60 g before pregnancy to around 1 kg at the time of birth.

# **Pregnancy Do’s**

* See your doctor regularly. Prenatal care can help keep you and your baby healthy and spot problems if they occur.
* Continue taking folic acid throughout your pregnancy. All women capable of pregnancy should get 400 to 800 micrograms (400 to 800 mcg or 0.4 to 0.8 mg) of folic acid every day. Getting enough folic acid lowers the risk of some birth defects. Taking a vitamin with folic acid will help you to be sure you are getting enough.
* Eat a variety of healthy foods. Include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, calcium-rich (Dairy products) foods.
* Get all essential nutrients, including iron, every day. Getting enough iron prevents anemia, which is linked to preterm birth and low-birth weight babies.
* Drink extra fluids, especially water.
* Get moving! Unless your doctor tells you otherwise, physical activity is good for you and your baby.
* Gain a healthy amount of weight. Gaining more than the recommended amount during pregnancy increases a woman’s risk for pregnancy complications. It also makes it harder to lose the extra kgs after childbirth. Check with your doctor to find out how much weight you should gain during pregnancy.
* Wash hands, especially after handling raw meat or using the bathroom.
* Get enough sleep. Aim for 7 to 9 hours every night. Resting on your left side helps blood flow to you and your baby and prevents swelling. Using pillows between your legs and under your belly will help you get comfortable.
* Set limits. If you can, control the stress in your life and set limits. Don’t be afraid to say “no” to requests for your time and energy.
* Make sure health problems are treated and kept under control. If you have diabetes, control your blood sugar levels. If you have high blood pressure, monitor it closely.
* Ask your doctor before stopping any medicines you take or taking any new medicines.
* Always wear a seatbelt. The lap strap should go under your belly, across your hips. The shoulder strap should go between your breasts and to the side of your belly.

# **Pregnancy Don’ts**

* Don’t smoke tobacco. Smoking during pregnancy passes nicotine and cancer-causing agents to your baby. Smoking also keeps your baby from getting needed nourishment and increases the risk of miscarriage, preterm birth, and infant death.
* Avoid exposure to toxic substances and chemicals, such as cleaning solvents, lead and mercury, some insecticides, and paint. Pregnant women should avoid exposure to paint fumes.
* Protect yourself and your baby from food-borne illness, which can cause serious health problems and even death. Handle, clean, cook, eat, and store food properly.
* Don’t drink alcohol. There is no known safe amount of alcohol a woman can drink while pregnant.
* Don’t take very hot baths or use hot tub. High temperatures can be harmful to the fetus, or cause you to faint.
* Don’t use scented feminine hygiene products. Pregnant women should avoid scented sprays, sanitary napkins and bubble bath. These products might irritate your vaginal area, and increase your risk of a urinary tract infection or yeast infection.
* Avoid X-rays. If you must have dental work or diagnostic tests, tell your dentist or physician that you are pregnant so that extra care can be taken.