



What will happen to my body?

Gaining weight is a normal part of pregnancy. Depending on your pre-pregnancy weight, it is recommended that you gain 15-30 pounds. This calls for adding an additional 300 calories per day to your diet.

The motility of the stomach, small bowel, and colon is reduced during pregnancy and may lead to heartburn and constipation. Safe remedies are Colace (stool softener), Tums, Mylanta, Maalox, and increasing your water and fiber intake. Hemorrhoids are also common during these nine months. Preparation H may provide some relief.

Nausea and vomiting occur in 70% of all pregnancies. Typical onset is between 14-16 weeks. For relief, you may find it helpful to eat frequent small meals and avoid foods and smells that trigger nausea. Sometimes prescription medications and IV fluids are needed.

Nasal stuffiness and nosebleeds are more frequent due to physiologic changes. Humidifiers in your bedroom and saline spray may help.

Stretch marks occur in about 50% of pregnant women. There is no effective way to prevent them, but they do become less visible after pregnancy.

Swelling of the ankles is very common in late pregnancy due to increased venous pressure in the legs. Increasing water intake, support hose, and avoiding salty foods will help. Sometimes the swelling does not go away until 2-3 weeks after the baby is born. Call the office if swelling of the hands and/or face worsens.

Breast tenderness and enlargement may occur in early pregnancy.

Low back pain is common due to the changing center of gravity and curving of the spine with the enlarging uterus. Baths, heating pads, exercise/stretching, and Tylenol may help.

What is safe and what should I avoid during pregnancy?

We generally restrict the use of hot tubs and tanning beds due to the high temperature and possible effects on the fetus.

You may have dental procedures.

Hair color and perms have not been associated with birth defects. However, inform your stylist that you are pregnant.

You should avoid taking care of cat litter, and eating raw or uncooked meat due to risk of toxoplasmosis exposure.

Healthy pregnant women may continue to exercise, lift, and work. You may continue your job until you go into labor. A "doctor's note" can be requested to start maternity leave at 38 weeks.

Pregnant/nursing women should not eat shark, swordfish, king mackerel or tilefish. You can safely eat up to 12 ounces per week of cooked fish from a store or restaurant. Do not eat more than 6 ounces per week of cooked fish caught in local waters.

For healthy pregnant women, travel, including air travel is safe until 36 weeks. During long trips, it is recommended to increase fluid intake, and walk and stretch your legs every 2-3 hours.

It is okay to paint during pregnancy if the room is well ventilated. However, stop and leave the room if you become nauseated, dizzy, or feel faint.

What tests will be performed during my pregnancy?

Initial prenatal labs include your blood type, testing for anemia, syphilis, hepatitis B, HIV, and rubella. A pap smear and cultures for gonorrhea and chlamydia are also done during the pelvic exam.

Doppler of fetal heart tones is performed at each visit starting at 10-12 weeks. The normal range of the baby's heartbeat is 120-160 beats per minute.

Between 16-20 weeks the "Quad Screen" test is offered. This is a blood sample that checks 4 different hormones, indicating your risk of having a baby with Down's syndrome, neural tube defects, or Trisomy 18.

An ultrasound is usually performed on your first visit to verify the pregnancy and gestational age of the baby. A second ultrasound is performed between 18-22 weeks to evaluate the due date, growth of the baby, look for anatomical problems, and evaluate for twins or triplets. Further ultrasounds are performed only for complications or high-risk pregnancies.

Cystic Fibrosis screening is an optional test that you and your partner may consider. It is important to notify your doctor if you have any family history of this disease.

Between 24-28 weeks, a one-hour glucola test is performed to screen for gestational diabetes.

Between 35-37 weeks, a vaginal swab for Group B Strep is done. If it is positive (up to 40% of all women tested may be positive), you will receive antibiotics in labor to decrease transmission of Group B Strep to your baby.

What happens when I go into labor?

Childbirth classes are extremely helpful in getting you more prepared for the big day. St. Edward Mercy Medical Center offers excellent childbirth classes. You may call 479-314-6394 to register.

You should come to Labor and Delivery (3rd floor of the Women's Center) if your water breaks or when contractions are 5 minutes apart and regular for one hour.

Your options for pain control are varied, and it is best to keep an open mind. We are available at all times to assist you with pain relief during labor. Pain medication may be given through your I.V. when you are sufficiently dilated. The epidural block is a technique in which a local anesthetic is injected into the epidural space. This is effective and safe for both baby and mother. The mother remains awake, alert and aware of her surroundings. Other pain control options are music, meditation and breathing patterns.

Many patients wonder if they will have an episiotomy. Studies have shown that an episiotomy does not reduce the risk of tearing at the time of delivery. Therefore our philosophy is not to perform a routine episiotomy. However, there may be a role for an episiotomy if your baby's heartbeat is worrisome or to make room for the baby to be delivered.

A circumcision is an elective cosmetic procedure that will be offered to you should your newborn be a boy. This procedure is performed by the pediatrician.

You may bring your video camera to the hospital to videotape your baby AFTER the delivery.

Office Hours: Our office is open 8 am – 5 pm Monday – Friday. We are closed for lunch from noon until 1 pm each day.

Directions To Our Office: We are located on the 4th floor of the Women's Center of Excellence (adjacent to the St. Edward Mercy Medical Center).