



## **Frequently Asked Questions for Pregnant Patients**

### **How many weeks/months am I?**

We measure pregnancy from the first day of your last period. There are 40 weeks in the average pregnancy. Typically you would conceive approximately two weeks after your menstrual cycle started. We will typically use your last period to calculate your due date. If you are unsure of your dates we will most likely do an ultrasound to verify. Since some months have four weeks and some five it does not make sense to count months. Learning to count by weeks will make much more sense.

### **Will my due date change?**

We typically use your last menstrual period (LMP) to calculate your due date. If an early ultrasound (first trimester) is done and it agrees within a week of your LMP we will leave your original date. If there is a discrepancy of more than 7 days we will usually change to the ultrasound date. In the second trimester the discrepancy can be up to 10 days before we would consider changing your due date.

### **When should I tell people I am pregnant?**

About 15-25% of diagnosed pregnancies end in an early miscarriage. There are many reasons for a pregnancy to end early. In most cases of miscarriage the embryo stops growing before the heartbeat is detected. If the baby has a heartbeat after 8 weeks from your last period, the risk of miscarriage drops to less than 5%. After 12 weeks, the risk is less than 1%.

### **What/how much should I eat during pregnancy?**

Only 300 extra calories daily are needed during pregnancy (equivalent to a bagel or half a sandwich). "Eating for two" will result in excessive weight gain and may be unhealthy for your pregnancy. On average, most women will gain 25-35 pounds during pregnancy. If you are excessively above your ideal body weight you may need to gain less. Your doctor will discuss this with you at your visit. Eat small frequent meals to avoid heartburn and hypoglycemia.

While most fish are rich in omega 3's and safe and encouraged during pregnancy some accumulate high levels of mercury which could be considered unsafe. The FDA recommends avoiding shark, tilefish, swordfish, and mackerel. Shellfish, shrimp and smaller fish such as snapper, catfish, and salmon are lower in mercury and up to 12 ounces a week is recommended. Canned tuna is low in mercury and can be included in the 12 ounces a week. Tuna steak is higher in mercury than canned and should be limited to 6 ounces a week. Raw fish such as sushi should not be consumed in pregnancy.

Unpasteurized cheeses and deli meats can carry *Listeria*, a bacteria that can cause miscarriage or fetal infection. While this is uncommon in our country it is wise to avoid unpasteurized products.

### **Alcohol and Smoking**

There is no safe limit of alcohol in pregnancy. Complete avoidance is best. Caffeine is safe in small quantities (1-2 caffeinated beverages daily). As always – smoking is highly discouraged during pregnancy and after. Smoking in pregnancy can lead to lower birthweight babies, high blood pressure, premature separation of the placenta (abruption) and fetal death. There are multiple ways to help you quit and we will be more than happy to help you.

### **Can I exercise?**

Staying active is great for you and the baby. If you have an uncomplicated pregnancy you can continue your current exercise regimen with a few modifications. When doing cardiovascular exercise (walking, running, elliptical etc) a good guideline is to keep your heart rate at a maximum of 140-150 beats per minute. If you are working out with weights, modify your exercises so that you will not be lying flat on your back after 12-15 weeks. Routine exercise is a good way to prevent excessive weight gain, reduce stress, and keep the physical strength necessary to deliver and take care of a new baby.

### **What about sex?**

Sex is safe in pregnancy unless you have complications such as bleeding, preterm contractions, a low lying or placenta previa. While sex may induce mild contractions, it will not make an otherwise healthy pregnant woman go into premature labor.

### **Can I get my hair colored?**

Hair color is safe during pregnancy. The portion of hair that is outside the scalp is dead tissue and does not absorb anything into the bloodstream.

### **Can I paint the baby's room?**

Painting with latex-based paints is acceptable. Try to maintain good ventilation in the room while you are painting.

### **Can I take a bath?**

Exposure to very high temperatures (more than 103 degrees F) for long periods of time in baths, hot tubs, or saunas can increase the risk of spina bifida in the first two months of pregnancy. Normal temperature baths are safe and can be very relaxing.

### **What if I have a cat?**

Outdoor cats can be exposed to Toxoplasmosis and can pass this parasite to humans through the feces. One could acquire it through changing the litter box of an infected cat. If your cat goes outside it would be wise to have someone else clean the litter box (darn) or make sure to wear gloves and wash your hands well. If your cat only lives inside and eats processed cat food he/she cannot get the disease. Cuddling your cat is safe and will not expose you to the disease. Dogs are not affected.

### **Can I go to the dentist?**

Routine dental work is safe in pregnancy and you are encouraged to keep up with your normal dental health routine. If more extensive dental work is needed your dentist may require a letter from us saying it is safe – contact the office if needed.