

During Your Pregnancy

The period before you give birth to your baby is the prenatal period. Your baby grows inside you during this time, usually, within **9 months**. Having the baby before that can be dangerous and the baby could end up being a preemie. Doctors consider having a baby before the **8 months**, a preterm birth.



What You Need to Know

- Alcohol, smoking, and substance use while pregnant can cause serious health problems for your baby. Your baby may be more likely to have premature birth, congenital disabilities, and other disorders.
- Being overweight or obese during pregnancy can cause problems for you and your baby. Talk to your care provider about your options to stay healthy during pregnancy, including taking vitamins and folic acid each day.
- Keeping doctor's appointments while you're pregnant is very important. In doing so, you're more likely to monitor and prevent problems and have a healthy birth.
- Recognizing the following warning signs or symptoms and seeking medical care immediately can save your life and your baby's. **IMPORTANT:** If you have any of these symptoms during pregnancy, contact your doctor or health care provider and get help right away. If you can't reach your provider, go to the emergency room.



Headache that won't go away or worsen over time.



Dizziness, fainting, or extreme tiredness that comes and goes over many days.



Changes in your vision including seeing flashes of light, blind spots, and double or having blurry vision.



Fever of 100.4°F or higher.



Extreme swelling of your hands or face, making it hard to bend your fingers or open your eyes.



Trouble breathing, catching your breath, or feeling your throat and/or chest tighten.



Chest pain or fast-beating heart.



Severe nausea and throwing up.



Severe belly pain that doesn't go away.



You feel that your baby has stopped moving or is moving less than before.



Any bleeding from your vagina that is more than spotting – like a period.



Severe swelling, redness, or pain in your leg or arm.



Thoughts about hurting yourself.



Changes in blood pressure can result in severe damage to organs (i.e. kidneys) or stroke.

Prenatal care means taking care of yourself, so your baby develops well. It also means paying attention to what's happening with your body to prevent complications that can lead to having your baby too soon or even death.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions. Bring a friend or family member with you for support and to help you ask the questions you need answers to.



Here is what you can say to start the conversation:

Thank you for seeing me. I am/was recently pregnant. The date of my last period was _____, and I'm having serious concerns about my health that I'd like to talk to you about.

I have been having _____ (symptoms) that feel like _____ (describe in detail) and have been lasting _____ (number of hours/days).

I am taking _____ (medication) currently or have recently taken it.

- I know my body, and this doesn't feel normal.
- What could these symptoms mean?
- Is there a test I can have to rule out a serious problem?
- At what point should I consider going to the emergency room or calling 911?

Credible Resources

Pregnant and Postpartum Women | CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/earher/pregnant-postpartum-women/index.html>

Urgent Material Warning Signs | AIM

<https://safehealthcareforeverywoman.org/council/patient-safety-tools/urgent-maternal-signs/>