

What is Prenatal Care?

Prenatal care is the medical health care recommended for women before and during pregnancy. The purpose of prenatal care is to monitor the progress of your pregnancy and the health of your unborn baby, to determine early any potential pregnancy complications, and to prevent them if possible. **Your good health helps your baby remain healthy too.**

Why Is Prenatal Care Important?²

Pregnancy complications include unexpected outcomes of labor and delivery that result in significant short- or long-term consequences to a woman's health. ¹ Getting good prenatal care is important so that any pregnancy complications are discovered and treated early. The potential consequences (to your own health and to the health of your unborn baby) of not getting prenatal care could be serious and even result in death. **Lack of prenatal care can lead to your baby being born too early and other related complications.**

Options for Prenatal Care

- ObGyn - specializes in prenatal care, pregnancy related issues and labor and delivery.
- Family Physician - sees patients from birth and throughout their lives. May have to refer to specialist for labor and delivery.
- Certified Nurse Midwife - trained and licensed in their state to provide prenatal care and delivery.

How Often Should I See My Doctor?³

Your healthcare practitioner will give you a schedule of all the visits you should have, and unless you or your baby have special needs that merit higher risk care, most doctors follow a set routine of visits. Generally these visits are:

- about once each month for weeks 4 through 28
- twice a month for weeks 28 through 36
- weekly for weeks 36 to birth

What Should I Expect During My Prenatal Visits?⁴⁵⁶

Your provider will draw blood to determine your blood type and check for iron deficiency. Low iron can cause you to feel tired and weak. Iron deficiency is common in pregnancy. It is easily treated with a supplement when caught early. Blood testing will determine if you and your babies blood are compatible. If you have a different RH factor than your babies, you could build antibodies that could cross into your babies blood and cause harm. Your provider can give you a medication called Rhogam to prevent this from happening. The blood test can diagnose early on any infections you have so they can be treated. **You will also have your urine tested for any bacterial infections that will put your pregnancy at risk.** At each check up you will have a physical exam. Your provider will check your blood pressure, weight, measure your belly and listen to the babies heartbeat.

References:

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3. "Prenatal Care and Tests | Office on Women's Health." OASH Office on Womens Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 30 Jan. 2019, www.women-health.gov/pregnancy/youre-pregnant-now-what/prenatal-care-and-tests. Accessed 6/18/20
4. Mayo Medical Staff. "Prenatal Care: 1st Trimester Visits." Mayo Clinic, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 7 Aug. 2020, www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/in-depth/prenatal-care/art-20044882. Accessed 6/18/20
5. Mayo Medical Staff. "Prenatal Care: 2nd Trimester Visits." Mayo Clinic, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 7 Aug. 2020, www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/in-depth/prenatal-care/art-20044581. Accessed 6/18/20
6. Mayo Medical Staff. "Prenatal Care: 3rd Trimester Visits." Mayo Clinic, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, 7 Aug. 2020, www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/pregnancy-week-by-week/in-depth/prenatal-care/art-20045660. Accessed 6/18/20

First Month Visit ⁴⁵⁶	Second Month Visit ⁴⁵⁶	Third Month Visit ⁴⁵⁶
<p>On your first visit, you will have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of pregnancy either by blood or urine test • Your medical history • A general physical exam • Blood tests • Examination and possible cultures for vaginal infections • A pap smear • Urinalysis to test for infection, sugar, and protein • Weight and blood pressure check • Counseling • An opportunity to ask questions 	<p>During this visit you may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An examination of the size and height of the uterus • A blood test for anemia • Urinalysis to test for infection, sugar, and protein • Weight and blood pressure check • Nutritional counseling • An opportunity to ask questions 	<p>During this month's visit you may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An examination of the size and height of the uterus • A blood test for anemia • Urinalysis to test for infection, sugar, and protein • Weight and blood pressure check • A chance to hear your baby's heartbeat for the first time • Discussion of additional tests if needed • An exam for swelling of hands and legs or fluid retention • An opportunity to ask questions
Fourth Month Visit ⁴⁵⁶	Fifth Month Visit ⁴⁵⁶	Sixth Month Visit ⁴⁵⁶
<p>During this month's visit you may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An examination of the size and height of uterus • An examination for swelling varicose veins and rashes • An opportunity to hear baby's heart-beat • A chance to see your baby for the first time on ultrasound • A triple screen test for possible prenatal genetic defects • Urinalysis to test for infection, sugar, and protein • Weight and blood pressure check 	<p>During this month's visit you may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An examination of the size and height of the uterus • An abdominal exam • An examination of your breasts • An examination for swelling varicose veins and rashes • Urinalysis to test for infection, sugar, and protein • Weight and blood pressure check • Assessment of how often your baby moves and what it feels like • An opportunity to hear baby's heart-beat • An opportunity to see an ultrasound • An opportunity to ask questions 	<p>During this month's visit you may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An examination of the size and height of the uterus • Urinalysis to test for infection, sugar, and protein • Weight and blood pressure check • A glucose tolerance test • A beta strep vaginal culture • An opportunity to hear baby's heart-beat • An opportunity to see an ultrasound • An opportunity to ask questions
Seventh Month Visit ⁴⁵⁶	Eighth Month Visit ⁴⁵⁶	Ninth Month Visit ⁴⁵⁶
<p>During months seven and eight, your prenatal visits may increase to twice a month. During these visits you may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An examination of the size and height of the uterus • An examination for swelling varicose veins and rashes • Urinalysis to test for infection, sugar, and protein • Weight and blood pressure check • A blood test for anemia • Nutritional counseling • An opportunity to hear baby's heart-beat • An opportunity to see an ultrasound • An opportunity to ask questions 	<p>During this month's visit you may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An examination of the size and height of the uterus • An examination for swelling varicose veins and rashes • Urinalysis to test for infection, sugar, and protein • Weight and blood pressure check • A blood test for anemia • Nutritional counseling • An opportunity to hear baby's heart-beat • An opportunity to see an ultrasound • An opportunity to ask questions • Beta Strep Culture at 36 weeks (it predicts strep status for about 5 weeks) 	<p>During month nine, your prenatal visits may increase to weekly. During this month's visit you may have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An examination of the size and height of the uterus • An examination to determine position of the baby • An internal exam to check cervix for dilation • Urinalysis to test for infection, sugar, and protein • Weight and blood pressure check • An opportunity to hear baby's heart-beat • An opportunity to see an ultrasound • Labor and delivery counseling • An opportunity to discuss the birth plan • An opportunity to ask questions