

Common concerns of pregnant women

Chiropractic

- Chiropractic care is so important to ensure proper nervous system function to all systems and organs of the mother. During this time of maternal changes and baby development it is important for the mother's system to function at optimal capacity. Since baby development starts in the first few weeks, early on in pregnancy is the most important time to begin regular chiropractic adjustments.
- Chiropractic care is safe to both the mother and baby throughout pregnancy. In the first trimester, the baby is protected within the mother's bony pelvis and within membranes and amniotic fluid. An adjustment cannot physically hurt the baby. So too, lying face down on the table during the early months will not harm the baby. Doctors of chiropractic will carefully position the mother with pregnancy pillows or table variations to make the mother most comfortable.
- As pregnancy progresses, chiropractors use adapted techniques for the mother's changing physiological needs. Consideration for her relaxed ligaments are taken into account, and safe, comfortable positions for the adjustment are employed.
- Throughout pregnancy, specific chiropractic adjustments remove interference to the mother's nervous system, balance pelvic muscles and ligaments, remove constraint to the mother's pelvis and allow for optimal baby positioning for birth.
- It can be demonstrated that chiropractic care significantly reduces the mean labor time. Primigravidae subjects receiving chiropractic care averaged 24% shorter labor times, and Multiparous subjects receiving chiropractic care averaged 39% shorter labor times versus control subjects.

Nutrition

- Eat a high vegetable protein diet, with plenty of whole grains, sprouts with fish at least twice a week. (Can be substituted with a natural protein drink) Protein requirements increase during pregnancy for optimal growth and energies. Studies show that it is the quality not quantity of protein that prevents toxemia.
- Iron, folic acid, and vitamin C supplements are recommended in the second and third trimesters. Brands from Health Food Stores with natural ingredients offer the best benefit to both the mother and baby.
- Eating a high-fiber diet with lots of fresh fruits, leafy salads and vegetables will avoid common problems with constipation and hemorrhoids.
- Frequent, small meals and snacks aid digestion and blood sugar balance throughout pregnancy, and prevent the overfilled feeling of large meals.
- Lots of bottled, unchlorinated unfluoridated water, mineral water and fresh juices keep the system clean and nourished. Fresh juices provide many nourishing vitamins and minerals.
- Avoid processed, refined, preserved and colored foods.

Chemicals and drugs

- **STOP SMOKING.** Miscarriage, low birth weight and infant mortality rates are significantly higher in babies of mothers who smoke during pregnancy.
- Refrain from caffeine: coffee, tea and colas.

- Stop drinking (although an occasional glass of wine is probably not a risk.)
- Do not use recreational drugs, which may cause birth defects.
- Hair sprays and hair dyes may prove to be toxic.
- Do not take a prescription or over-the-counter medication without consulting your doctor, the Physicians Desk Reference and the pharmaceutical manufacturer.
- Do not expose yourself to solvents or other dangerous chemicals.

Exercise

- Do not start any new, aggressive exercise program during pregnancy.
 - Specific pelvic and abdominal for pregnancy are suitable.
 - Kegel exercises are highly recommended.
- Walking, swimming, yoga and stationery bike riding offer bilateral body movement and toning with low impact and jarring.
- Avoid straight sit-ups, weight lifting, or other exercise that involves holding the breath which elevates intra-abdominal pressure.
- Slow down the pace of exercise programs. Do aerobic exercises at a conversational pace.
- Precede any exercise with a slow warm-up and follow with a slow stretch-out.
- Avoid twisting and bending movements that may offset balance and cause torsion to the pelvic diaphragm.
- Avoid postures that keep you on your back for prolonged periods of time--this may inhibit the blood flow to major organs and the uterus. Keep one or both knees bent in this position.
- While standing, work to maintain good posture: keep pelvis and shoulders back, chin up. Also avoid standing for prolonged periods of time, as this may stagnate circulation.
- Sit with pelvis rocked forward, knees lower than hips. This maintained posture will help the baby assume the correct position for labor and birth.

Stop Exercising and Consult Birth Health Care Provider If:

⇒ There is bleeding or any gush of fluid from the vagina; severe nausea or vomiting; persistent headaches; high blood pressure; anemia; persistent uterine contractions (Braxton Hicks); pre-clampsia; excessive fatigue; swelling, pain or redness in the calf of one leg; sudden swelling of hands, face, ankles, feet.

Employment

- Women in sedentary jobs should get up and walk at frequent intervals to promote circulation and prevent leg swelling or thrombophlebitis.
- It is advisable for a pregnant woman to rest during lunch and breaks.
- It is important that a pregnant woman's work not cause her to strain physically or become too fatigued. Always lift from a squatting position to prevent back strain.
- A woman's work should not expose her to dangerous chemicals or physical hazards such as radiation or microwaves.
- Avoid fatigue, stress, and altered rest and dietary habits; particularly avoid missing meals in the last half of pregnancy, to prevent ketosis or premature labor.

Stress

- Pregnancy and birth are natural phenomena and they require change and adaptation.
- Use relaxation techniques to deal with stress.

- Pamper yourself with daily activities that are enjoyable.
- Share concerns with relatives and friends in frequent, intimate conversations.
- Attend a prenatal group for support as well as for information.
- Set aside quiet times with the father to discuss concerns, points of conflict, and plans for the pregnancy, birth and newborn period.
- Rapidly seek reassurance for the questions and worries either from the doctor, midwife, doula or from experienced mothers.

→It has been noted by midwives, doulas and other birth attendants that the emotional attitude of the pregnant mother has more to do with a healthy pregnancy and successful birth than any other single contributing factor. It is imperative then, that the expectant mother learn how to both trust and relax her body. Your doctor or chiropractor will help you respect the magnificence of creation and birth. Below are relaxation techniques for you to use throughout pregnancy, in preparation for birth, while nursing and for the rest of your mothering years.

How relaxation affects the pregnant woman and her body

- Fear and anxiety decrease.
- Mother feels calm.
- Blood flow to uterus is maximized.
- Blood flow to baby is maximized.
- Baby's oxygen and nutrients are maximized as a result of increased blood flow.
- Mother and baby are less affected by stress hormones circulating in the blood.

When to briefly relax

During stressful times in the household (before dinner, before bed).

After stressful times (after the kids go to school, after a family fight).

During planned rest times (coffee breaks, lunch hour).

More often during high-stress periods.

More often when you feel as if you might be getting sick.

Becoming aware of muscle tension

Everyone has certain areas or muscles that get tense when they are nervous or under pressure. Here are the most common areas to check for tension:

Eyes, Jaw, Neck and Shoulders, Lower back and Pelvis

To feel muscle tension, lie in a comfortable position with your hands resting at your sides, Raise one hand slightly by bending it at the wrist and you will feel muscles in the top of your forearms contract and tense. If you let your hand go limp, these muscles will relax and your hand will drop. With practice you will become aware of the subtle difference in feeling between a contracted muscle and a flexed one. If you're not sure of the feeling of tension, rest the fingers of your other hand lightly on top of your forearm and feel the muscle contract as you raise your hand.