

Live Well to

Learn Well

Web:

health.cornell.edu

Phone (24/7):

607-255-5155

Fax:

607-255-0269

Appointments:

Monday–Saturday

Check web for hours, services, providers, and appointment information

110 Ho Plaza,

Ithaca, NY

14853-3101

Learning you are pregnant can create excitement and eagerness as well as concern. You are likely to have many questions.

This fact sheet is intended to address issues that may be on your mind between the time you learn you are pregnant and when you have your first appointment with an obstetrician or midwife. Cornell Health can assist you with your early pregnancy health needs and refer you to a pregnancy care practice in the community. Be sure to tell one of our health care providers if you have known medical conditions that you think may affect your pregnancy.

While you are waiting for your first prenatal care appointment, taking care of yourself is important. Below are some tips to help you navigate the next few weeks.

Listen to your body

Hormonal changes can be dramatic in early pregnancy. Some women experience few symptoms of pregnancy while others experience many including nausea, breast tenderness, or an overwhelming feeling of fatigue. The need to urinate frequently is common, as are constipation, mood changes, and heartburn. Usually, these symptoms are mild.

More severe symptoms such as painful urination, daily vomiting, severe headache, pelvic or abdominal pain or worsening mood changes should be discussed with your health care provider.

Be nourished

- Eat smaller servings of nutritious food more frequently throughout the day during early pregnancy. Nausea is sometimes a symptom of hunger, so consider eating a healthy snack every 2-3 hours. Carry fresh fruit, crackers, protein bars or other healthy foods with you. If nausea is worse in the morning, keep some snacks by your bedside and eat a little before getting up.
- Eat a wide variety of foods throughout your pregnancy. If you follow a special diet, consider meeting with a nutritionist at Cornell Health to discuss your unique needs during pregnancy. Pregnancy is not a time to diet. Your obstetrician or midwife will help you monitor healthy weight gain during your pregnancy.
- Take a folate (folic acid) supplement. The occurrence of some birth defects such as spina bifida can be lessened when women use at least 400mcg of folate every day both before and during pregnancy. A multivitamin or prenatal vitamin can supply this amount. Eating foods



Relax and remember to be kind to yourself ...

such as dark leafy vegetables, liver, fruit and whole grains can also supply folate.

- Sip on water throughout the day to help you manage constipation and nausea. Drinking lots of fluid all at once can make nausea worse, so consider drinking a few sips every 15 minutes between snacks. Try to keep your urine a pale yellow color.
- Monitor nausea and vomiting. If you are concerned that nausea or vomiting is preventing you from getting the right nutrition, come to Cornell Health to discuss more ways to manage the symptoms.

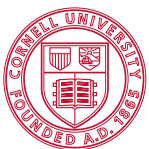
Be well

There are many things you can do to help make your pregnancy healthier.

- Rest when you are tired. Consider taking naps when you are able.
- Exercise moderately through brisk walking, swimming or gentle yoga.
- Get a flu shot if you will be pregnant during flu season.

Pay attention to your thoughts and give yourself permission to feel scared, excited, anxious, exhilarated and sad: sometimes all in the same day! Not only is your body adjusting to changes that are occurring, but you are adjusting to the idea of parenting and how it may affect your relationships, career, finances or academics. You can talk about concerns like these at Cornell Health and our clinical staff can help you find resources to support you as your pregnancy progresses.

Above all, relax and remember to be kind to yourself. The physical changes you are first



experiencing are temporary and, even if your first few weeks are a bit of a challenge, you will probably find relief as you near the second trimester. Please talk to us if you are worried. We want to help you feel your best!

Be safe

Some things should be avoided in pregnancy. No amount of alcohol has been shown to be safe in pregnancy as it can harm a developing fetus. If you drink caffeine, do so in moderation. Some studies have shown higher amounts of caffeine are linked to miscarriage or low birth weight in babies. Smoking tobacco can cause miscarriage, low birth weight babies, and other health problems. If stopping drinking alcohol or smoking will be hard for you, talk with your health care provider about the individualized programs available at Cornell Health that can help you.

Be cautious about medications. If you are currently using a medication, check with Cornell Health to make sure it is safe to use while pregnant. Some non-prescription medications you may want to use for a cold, headache or stomach upset can cause problems in early pregnancy. Others are considered safe. If you are unsure, call Cornell Health before beginning any new medicine or herbal product.

- Tylenol (acetaminophen, paracetamol) can be used for a headache, fever or pain.
- Sudafed (pseudoephedrine), plain Robitussin (not DM) and Cepacol lozenges can be used for cold symptoms such as a sore throat or stuffy nose.
- Benedryl (diphenhydramine) can be used for allergy symptoms.
- Metamucil can be used for constipation.
- Emetrol can be used for nausea and vomiting.
- Imodium (loperamide) can be used for diarrhea

Do NOT Take: Ibuprofen, Advil, aspirin, Aleve, Pepto-Bismol, Alka-Seltzer, or any medicines that contain these. Many cold medicines have them in their ingredients, so check the label before using.

Be sure to tell any health care provider you are seeing that you are pregnant. They will need to consider your pregnancy when recommending medications, x-rays or other treatments.

Be “covered”

Because all insurance policies differ, Cornell Health recommends you talk with a representative in the Office of Student Benefits, 607-255-6363. Their staff can tell you which expenses are covered by Cornell’s Student Health Plan (SHP) or the student health fee, and which you will be responsible for. If you have a different insurance plan, be sure to call your plan for information. (Often, a toll-free number is provided on the back of an insurance card.)

The Tompkins County Department of Social Services’ Medicaid Office, 607-274-5330, can help determine whether you are eligible to receive additional assistance through Medicaid.

Be informed

You may find the following list of resources helpful in providing additional information about the basics of body changes, testing, experiences of pregnancy and childbirth:

Books

- *The Complete Book of Pregnancy and Childbirth*, Sheila Kitzinger
- *Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Newborn*, Penny Simkin PT, Janet Whallet, and Ann Keppler
- *Active Woman’s Guide to Pregnancy: Practical Advice for Getting Outdoors*, Aneema Van Groenou, MD (Note: this book is for women who don’t want to give up vigorous exercise.)

Websites

- Early pregnancy care: marchofdimess.com/pnhec/159.asp
- Nutrition and food safety: cfsan.fda.gov/~pregnant/pregnant.html
- Workplace safety throughout pregnancy: cdc.gov/niosh/docs/99-104/default.html

Be aware

Sometimes pregnancies don’t progress to full-term. As many as 1 in every 4 early pregnancies end in miscarriage. Sometimes there are problems with the embryo’s chromosomes; sometimes a fertilized egg does not implant correctly into a woman’s uterus. Often, no reason can be found for a miscarriage.

Symptoms such as vaginal bleeding, uterine cramping, or back pain can be signs of early miscarriage, but not always. Approximately 20% of women will have some light bleeding in the first trimester and continue to have a healthy pregnancy.

- If you experience any of these symptoms, call Cornell Health.
- If your bleeding is heavy (more than 1 pad every hour) or cramping is more than a menstrual cramp, go the Cayuga Medical Center (or other hospital) emergency department.