



## DID YOU KNOW:

- Every year nearly one million American women deliver babies without receiving adequate medical attention.
- Babies born to mothers who received no prenatal care are *three* times more likely to be born at low birth weight, and *five* times more likely to die, than those whose mothers received prenatal care.

## Five Ways To Have A Healthy Pregnancy and Baby:

1. See a doctor or other health care provider from the start of your pregnancy.
2. Don't drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes or take drugs.
3. Eat healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, low-fat milk, eggs, cheese, and grains.
4. Take good care of your health and exercise sensibly.
5. Have your baby checked by a doctor or health care provider right after birth and throughout childhood.



If you are pregnant, here's good news. There are programs in your State that can help you have a healthy baby. These programs offer medical care; support and advice for pregnant women; information about health insurance; and other services you and your baby may need.

For information on prenatal services in your community, call **1-800-311-BABY** or your State or local Health Department. For information in Spanish, call **1-800-504-7081**.

*Through a unique public/private partnership, the documentary film "A Healthy Start: Begin Before Baby's Born," was created, produced, and broadcast by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Lifetime Television; Moxie Firecracker Films; and the Ad Council. For more information on the documentary go to [www.lifetimev.com](http://www.lifetimev.com).*



*Lifetime*  
Television for Women



# A Healthy Start:

## *Begin Before Baby's Born*



## What is prenatal care?

Prenatal care is medical attention given to the expectant mother and her developing baby. It also involves the mother's caring for

herself by following her health care provider's advice, practicing good nutrition, getting plenty of rest, exercising sensibly, and avoiding things that could harm her or her baby.

## Why is prenatal care important?

Habits that may not harm an adult may still harm your baby's development. Remember that your child's health begins long before it is born. Through proper prenatal care, you can reduce your baby's risk for health problems.

## Is smoking bad for my baby?

A pregnant smoker is at a higher risk for problems in her pregnancy. Babies born to mothers who smoke have a lower average birthweight, an increased rate of premature birth, and are at greater risk of death from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), than babies of nonsmokers.

Studies show that women who quit smoking early in their pregnancies can reduce the risk of damage to their babies. Even quitting in the last month of pregnancy can help your baby by increasing the amount of oxygen available to him/her during delivery.

## Will alcohol harm my baby?

There is no guaranteed safe level of alcohol consumption if you are pregnant. Any alcohol you drink enters both yours and your baby's bloodstream. Alcohol use during pregnancy may cause fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). FAS babies may suffer from physical, behavioral, and mental problems.

## Should I avoid taking medicine?

Don't take any medication without first consulting your health care provider. Even over-the-counter medication—for example, antihistamines or pain medications that contain aspirin or ibuprofen—can be harmful to a developing baby.

Be careful about vitamins. Take the prenatal vitamins prescribed or recommended by your health care provider, but don't take any additional vitamins on your own. Although you need more of some things, like iron, calcium, and folate, too much of other nutrients can harm your baby.

## What foods should I eat?

A healthy baby starts with healthy food. When you are pregnant, everything you eat or drink nourishes your baby, too. That's why it's



important to eat healthy foods. A pregnant woman only needs about 300 extra calories a day to meet her needs and give her baby the necessary nutrients. Therefore, your goal should be to eat highly nutritious foods

while avoiding excessive calories, fat, sugar, and sodium.

## Do I need to see a health care provider before pregnancy?

All women of childbearing age are encouraged to visit a health care provider annually. See your health care provider immediately if you suspect you are pregnant.

## Do my baby and I need to see a health care provider after delivery?

Yes, following your pregnancy, it's important to make and keep your health care appointments for both you and your baby.

## Where can I find health care and social services?

There are many free or low-cost services for pregnant women and their babies. You may find services through the following places:

- Hospitals
- Churches
- Doctors' offices
- Other human service programs
- State or local Health Departments

