

WHAT IS PRENATAL CARE?

Prenatal care is the health care you receive during your pregnancy. Regular check-ups with your healthcare provider are important to ensure both you and your baby are healthy.



WHY EARLY AND REGULAR PRENATAL CARE IS IMPORTANT:

Spot Problems Early: Helps find and address any health issues for you and your baby

Nutrition Guidance: Provides essential tips on what to eat for a healthy pregnancy

Emotional Support: Offers help and encouragement during your pregnancy journey



If you miss your period for more than 2-4 weeks or have a positive pregnancy test, it's a good idea to reach out to a healthcare provider for guidance and support

WHY IS PRENATAL CARE IMPORTANT?



Monitor Baby's Growth: Regular check-ups help ensure that your baby is developing properly



Health Screenings: Detect and manage conditions like gestational diabetes, high blood pressure, low iron levels & screening for genetic conditions



Nutritional Guidance: Receive tailored advice on diet and supplements, ensuring you and your baby get the necessary nutrients



Emotional Support: Address mood changes, stress, and mental health issues during pregnancy

DIET IN PREGNANCY:

Nutrition Tips:

- **Balanced Diet:** Include a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and dairy in your diet
- **Folic Acid:** Essential for preventing birth defects, found in leafy greens, beans, and fortified cereals. Daily recommended intake is 1mg/day even up to 3 months before pregnancy
- **Iron:** Vital for preventing anemia, found in red meat, beans, and spinach
- **Calcium and Vitamin D:** Vitamin D 1000U per day & 3-4 servings of calcium-containing foods (ex. leafy greens, soybeans)

Cultural Considerations:

South Asian diets are often high in carbohydrates and fats, which can increase the risk of gestational diabetes. To manage this, choose healthier options like whole grains (brown rice, whole wheat roti) and use healthy fats like olive oil. Traditional spices, such as turmeric, are great to include for their anti-inflammatory benefits. Regular exercise, especially after meals, can also help regulate blood sugar levels and support a healthy pregnancy.

Foods to avoid during pregnancy:

- Fish high in mercury – like shark and swordfish.
- Raw or undercooked seafood, meat, and eggs
- Unpasteurized dairy and juices
- Deli meats
- Alcohol

EXERCISE IN PREGNANCY:

Exercise Guidelines:

- **Stay Active:** Aim for at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week, such as walking or swimming
- **Yoga:** Prenatal yoga can be particularly beneficial, improving flexibility and reducing stress
- **Avoid High-Impact Activities:** Activities that pose a risk of falling or abdominal trauma should be avoided

Cultural Considerations:

Traditional South Asian practices, such as gentle prenatal yoga or meditation, can be incorporated to maintain physical and mental well-being.

MOOD CONCERNS DURING PREGNANCY:

Pregnancy brings significant physical and emotional changes. It's common to experience mood swings, anxiety, or even depression during pregnancy. Seeking help is important if you experience:

- **Persistent Sadness:** Feeling down for more than two weeks
- **Severe Anxiety:** Overwhelming worry or panic attacks
- **Difficulty Sleeping:** Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- **Loss of Interest:** Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy

Cultural Considerations: Discussing mental health can be stigmatized in some South Asian communities. Remember, seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.



GETTING HELP

South Asian Women's Centre (SAWC)

Services: Offers prenatal education, nutrition counselling, and emotional support in multiple South Asian languages

Location: Toronto, ON

Contact: South Asian Women's Centre | (416) 537-2276

The Scarborough Hospital (TSH) - Prenatal & Parenting Programs

Services: Provides prenatal classes and one-on-one support tailored to South Asian families.

Location: Scarborough, ON

Contact: Scarborough Health Network | (416) 438-2911 ext. 3411

Health Start, Healthy Future

Services: Online and in-person resources for prenatal health, nutrition, and mental well-being.

Contact: Healthy Start, Healthy Future | (647) 234-8483

Women's College Hospital: Women's Health Program

Services: Offers support, information, and referral services for victims of crime, including intimate partner violence and child abuse.

Contact: Ontario Victim Services | 1-888-579-2888

Your Health and Your Baby's Health Matter!

Remember, prenatal care is essential for a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. Regular visits to your healthcare provider, proper nutrition, staying active, and taking care of your mental health are key components of a successful pregnancy.

For any concerns or if you need immediate assistance, please contact your local healthcare provider or one of the resources listed above.