



INFORMATION SHEET

What Every Pregnant Woman Should Know

Eat Small Meals and Take Folic Acid Every Day:

- Eat Healthy and Eat Frequent Small meals four or five times a day! Healthy foods, such as whole grains, fruits and vegetables, are the best sources of vitamins and minerals.
- Take a multivitamin or prenatal vitamin with folic acid every day before pregnancy and during pregnancy, as part of a healthy diet. Folic acid is a B vitamin that can help prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord called neural tube defects (NTDs). Folic acid works to prevent these birth defects only if taken before conception and during early pregnancy. Folic acid is also found in the following foods: fortified breakfast cereals such as Total and Product 19; lentils, asparagus; spinach; black beans; peanuts (use only if you do not have a peanut allergy); orange juice (from concentrate is best); enriched breads and pasta; romaine lettuce; and broccoli.
- Avoid the following foods: Swordfish, shark, king mackerel and tilefish. These fish can contain potentially risky levels of mercury. A pregnant woman can safely eat up to 12 ounces (two average meals) a week of a variety of fish and shellfish that are low in mercury. These include shrimp, canned light tuna, salmon, pollock and catfish. But you should avoid more than 6 ounces of canned albacore (white) tuna per week. Canned white tuna has more mercury than canned light tuna.

Take Care of Yourself and Your Baby

- Get early and regular prenatal care. Start as soon as you know you are pregnant. Go to every appointment
- Stay away from alcohol and cigarettes. They are not good for you or your baby. Street drugs may start preterm labor
- Try to avoid stress – ask family and friends for help
- Talk to your health care provider about what you can do to reduce your risk for preterm labor
- Some women have dental problems during pregnancy. Hormonal changes can make your gums sore, swollen and bleeding. Brushing and flossing your teeth daily can prevent this. If you did not have your teeth cleaned before you found out that you were pregnant, having your teeth cleaned by a dental hygienist or dentist early in your pregnancy may help prevent most gum problems

Know the Signs of Preterm Labor

- Contractions every 10 minutes or more often. The best way to feel a contraction is to place your hands on your abdomen and feel for uterine hardening. Preterm contractions often do not cause pain.
- Clear, pink or brownish fluid (water) leaking from your vagina
- The feeling that your baby is pushing down
- Low, dull backache
- Cramps that feel like your period
- Cramps with or without diarrhea

Know what to do

Call your health care provider (nurse, doctor or midwife) or go to the hospital right away if you think you are having preterm labor, or if you have any of the warning signs. Call even if you have only one sign.

Your health care provider may tell you to:

- Come in to the office or go to the hospital for a checkup
- Stop what you are doing and rest on your left side for one hour
- Drink 2-3 glasses of water or juice (not coffee or soda)
- If the symptoms get worse, or do not go away after one hour, call your provider again or go to the hospital. If the symptoms get better, relax for the rest of the day

For more information, please visit the Kane County Health Department's website at kanehealth.com/aok.htm or call 630-208-3801

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