



# TIPS

from the Consumer Health Action Network

December 2006

## Tips for Pregnant Women: What to Expect (in Health Care) When You're Expecting

*While you're waiting for the arrival of your new baby, there are some simple things you can do to keep both of you healthy and happy.*

### *Don't wait before seeking medical attention!*

It is extremely important that you receive prenatal care early and often. If you are currently uninsured, there are several options for medical care. Read on, and please don't hesitate to call us with any questions or for more information.

- ★ **HUSKY (Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth)** provides free or low-cost health insurance coverage to all eligible Connecticut children and their parents. Even if you are not eligible, your children might be. Call 1-877-CT-HUSKY (HUSKY Infoline) or 1-888-873-4585 (our toll-free CT number) for more information.
- ★ **Healthy Start** helps pregnant women and families with children under three years old stay healthy by coordinating care and assisting them with the HUSKY application process. Healthy Start sites offer various childbirth and parenting classes, and they can refer you to other great resources in your community. You must usually meet the same income requirement as for HUSKY. Call our office to find the Healthy Start site nearest you.
- ★ **Hospitals and Community Health Centers** often provide **prenatal care on a sliding scale** (prices for services are based on your income). These options are generally available to women without private insurance, those on HUSKY or other public assistance, and the uninsured.
- ★ **St. Raphael's Women's Clinic [(203) 789-3151]** provides prenatal care and general gynecological services.
- ★ **St. Raphael's Project Mothercare [(203) 789-3562]** operates at various fixed sites throughout the week. Call for times and locations.
- ★ **Yale-New Haven Hospital Women's Center [(203) 688-5555]** is one of several primary care centers available at YNHH. There are also a Pediatric Clinic and an Adult Care Clinic.
- ★ Many other affordable, sliding scale options are available throughout CT. Call 211 (Infoline) or our office for nearby community health centers.
- ★ If you have private insurance, check to make sure that your plan covers pregnancy-related services.
- ★ You should **schedule your first examination** during the first 6-8 weeks of your pregnancy. This is about 2-4 weeks after your missed menstrual period.

**Here are a few other general health tips and advice.** Of course, it's important to discuss all questions and concerns with your health care provider.

- ★ Some medications (prescription and over-the-counter) that are generally safe could harm your growing baby. **Talk to your health care provider about medications** you're currently taking. If you get sick, check to make sure any drugs you take are safe for pregnant women.
- ★ **Eat right.** To help your baby grow strong and healthy, eat lots of fruits and veggies, whole grains, and calcium-rich foods. Avoid saturated fats and limit your caffeine intake. Remember: you're eating for two now, make sure you both get the best!
- ★ **WIC** (Women, Infants, and Children Program) can provide your family with nutritional counseling and food vouchers at no cost to you if you meet their income eligibility guidelines. Call 1-800-741-2142 (CT WIC hotline) or our office for the WIC office closest to you.
- ★ **Take your vitamins!** Making sure you and your baby get all the necessary nutrients is extremely important, especially at the start of your pregnancy. Buy prenatal vitamins with folic acid at your local drugstore and remember to take one everyday.
- ★ Think ahead about what you'll need once the baby's born, and take note of helpful resources in your community. For example, the **New Haven Diaper Bank** can provide diapers if you can't afford them. Call (203) 843-5372 for more information.
- ★ **Quit your bad habits.** If you smoke, drink, or use other drugs, please talk to your health

care provider about quitting. Don't hesitate to ask for help, as these habits are extremely dangerous to your baby. If you smoke, you can call the National Network of Tobacco Cessation Quitlines at 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669).

- ★ Unless your doctor tells you not to, try to **exercise for at least 30 minutes a day.** You will feel better throughout your pregnancy, and labor might even be easier if you're in better shape.
- ★ **Do not change the cat litter!** It may contain parasites that cause an infection called toxoplasmosis, which leads to serious birth defects. Wear gloves while gardening, and do not eat undercooked or uncooked meat or fish.
- ★ **Avoid hot tubs, saunas, and unnecessary x-rays.** Also stay away from dangerous chemicals such as insecticides, some cleaners, paint thinners, lead, and mercury. Check your household cleaning products for pregnancy warning labels.
- ★ About 10-15% of women experience **depression** during and after their pregnancy. It's not something to be ashamed or in denial about. Please seek help from your health care provider or call the Postpartum Support International Helpline at 1-800-944-4PPD.
- ★ **Get informed.** Talk with experienced moms, read books, and learn more about what to expect through the pregnancy and after the birth.