

## How To Advocate for Yourself: Pregnancy

Each pregnancy journey can look different, but everyone should have access to quality health care and support. It can be overwhelming to know how and when to start talking with your doctor about concerns, especially when appointments can be short. Use the checklist below to help guide the conversation with your doctor as you and your trusted ally advocate for a healthy pregnancy. Keep in mind that your doctor's answers are tailored to you based on your health history and whether you had previous pregnancies.

### Doctor's appointments and medicines:

- How often should I go for routine visits? When should I see a provider apart from these visits?
- What vaccines should I have, and is it safe to get them while pregnant?
- What over-the-counter medicines can I take?
- Should I consult my doctor before taking any new medicines?
- What should I know about avoiding exposure to toxic substances?
- Am I at high risk for any problems during pregnancy?
- What should I know about my iron levels and their effect on me and my baby?
- Are there any specialists I should be seeing?
- What health screenings should I receive?
- What tests and lab work are recommended and when should I receive them?
- If I've had previous pregnancies, what do I need to consider for my current pregnancy?

*Continue to receive routine dental care, as gums may be more likely to get inflamed or infected during pregnancy.*

### Symptoms:

- What are common symptoms that would be normal to experience? How do I know when they are not normal?
- If I have diabetes, what do I need to know?
- If I have high blood pressure, what do I need to know?
- For how long is it normal to feel morning sickness?
- Is it normal to have heartburn? How can I limit it?

*It's important to also take care of your mental health needs during pregnancy. Tell your doctor if you are experiencing any symptoms such as depression, anxiety, home or food insecurity, or lack of family or community support.*

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**Diet and lifestyle:**

- Am I expected to gain weight during pregnancy? How much weight gain is normal?
- What type of exercise is safe for me during pregnancy, and which should I avoid?
- What foods should I eat and avoid?
- When should I start taking prenatal vitamins? Which ones do you recommend?
- Should I take additional folic acid?
- How much caffeine can I safely consume?
- Are there any other lifestyle changes that I should make?
- Should I be concerned about the amount of fish I consume or what kind?
- Are there any other precautions I should take during pregnancy?

**A note about your rights and treatment as a patient:**

*You are entitled to high-quality, scientifically accurate, respectful, and compassionate care that is free from racism, bias, or any other type of negative treatment by your care provider. Equipping yourself with the information above and choosing trusted allies who can help advocate with you and for you is a crucial part of making sure your rights and preferences are respected by doctors and hospitals as you prepare for the arrival of your baby.*

## How To Advocate for Yourself: Labor and Delivery

Everyone has a different plan of action for labor and delivery, ranging from organized spreadsheets to handwritten or printed papers. No matter which approach you choose, it is important to be fully informed and prepared for when the time comes. The list of questions below is a starting point of what to ask your doctor and your hospital. Feel free to customize these questions to best fit your needs.

### Questions for your doctor:

- What hospitals are you affiliated with?
- What level of neonatal care is available at the hospital where I'll deliver?
- What are some labor symptoms? At what point should I call you when I think I'm in labor, and when I should go to the hospital?
- What happens if you are not available when I go into labor?

### Questions for the hospital and admission:

- Where do I go when I come to the hospital? Is it a different location at night?
- Where is the best place to park? Do you have to pay for parking?
- What paperwork do I need to complete prior to admission? Can I do it before labor?
- How many visitors are allowed in the delivery room? Is it the same for a cesarean section (C-section)? Do you have any policies about siblings?
- What types of labor rooms are available?
- Will I be able to use a tub or shower?
- Will there be an exercise ball in the room? If not, can I bring an exercise ball?
- What should I bring with me when I am in labor?
- What type of food or drink is allowed, both in the room and during labor? Am I allowed to bring food or drink from home? Do you provide clear liquids (popsicles, broth, Jell-O, etc.)?
- What types of medicines are available?
- What kind of fetal monitors do you have? Am I expected to wear the fetal monitor the entire time?
- Will I have the same room postpartum that I did for labor and birth?
- Can family members stay overnight?
- What pain relief options are available postpartum? Do they differ if you've had a C-section?