

Empire BlueCross BlueShield
An Anthem Company

Get healthy. Stay healthy.

Healthy babies

You are the guardian of your baby's health from the moment of conception. The decisions you make during pregnancy and your baby's early years will affect your little one as he or she grows. But it is never too late to make changes to benefit your child's health.

Just a twinkle in your eye

Your habits during pregnancy lay the foundation for your child's health. The nutrients you take in through food and drink help your baby's body develop as it should. Eat healthy foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, whole grains, and low fat milk. You should consume about 300 extra calories a day while you are pregnant,[1] which is really not a lot! You might feel much hungrier than you did before, though, so make each calorie count. High calorie snacks like candy bars or chips are convenient, but offer little in the way of nutrition for a developing baby. Gaining too much or too little weight during pregnancy poses a risk to your baby, so try to eat a healthy diet without too much sugar, fat or sodium.[1]

Just as the food you ingest nourishes your baby, any alcohol, drugs or tobacco you take in will also pass to your baby. Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen available to your developing baby, and can lead to low birth weight, premature delivery, and lifelong respiratory problems. Babies born to mothers who smoke are also at a higher risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).[1] No safe level of alcohol consumption has been established, and drinking during pregnancy can result in Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), which causes physical, behavioral and mental problems. And street drugs or even prescription drugs can cause a host of problems, so consult your doctor before taking anything – even over-the-counter medicines.[1]

Proper prenatal care is vital – babies born to mothers who received no prenatal care are five times more likely to die than babies whose mothers received prenatal care.[1] See a doctor as soon as you find out you're pregnant, and follow his or her advice on nutrition, screenings for complications and how to plan for a safe and healthy delivery.

Your bundle of joy

One of the most significant things you can do to ensure the health of your baby is to breastfeed. Breastfeeding is the way human infants are designed to be fed, and offers a host of advantages for mother and child. The American Academy of Pediatrics has determined that breastfeeding can help reduce the occurrence of diarrhea, ear infections, respiratory infections, urinary tract infections and botulism. It can also help prevent SIDS, diabetes, allergies, and some chronic digestive diseases.[2]

Take precautions to ensure your baby's safety. Childproof your home – even close supervision can't prevent a crawling baby from injuring him or herself. Protect your child from the sun by applying sunscreen before you take him outside, and never ever leave him alone in a car or with a family pet. Most importantly, use a car seat every time you ride in a car. Keep your baby rear-facing until he or she is at least one year and 20 pounds – preferably longer. Position your baby's seat in the rear of the car, and away from any airbags.[2]

Finally, create a safe sleep environment for your baby. SIDS claims the lives of about 5,000 apparently healthy babies in the United States each year.[2] To reduce your baby's risk:

- Do not smoke or allow others to smoke around your baby.
- Put your baby to sleep on his back unless his pediatrician indicates there is a medical reason to do otherwise.
- Breastfeed.
- Use a firm mattress for the baby – do not put him to sleep on fluffy blankets or with stuffed toys.
- Keep the room in which your baby sleeps at a temperature that is comfortable for you – resist the urge to warm up the baby's room to make sure he is cozy. Instead, put him to bed in a blanket sleeper or warm pajamas if you are worried he'll be chilly.

Resources

For information on prenatal services in your community, call 800-311-BABY (800-311- 2229). For information in Spanish, call 800- 504-7081. Contact The National Women's Health Information Center at 800-994-9662, or visit **womenshealth.gov/pregnancy** or **womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding** for information and resources about healthy choices for you and your baby.



Visit empireblue.com for more ways to get healthy – and stay healthy.

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Certain factual or statistical information was derived from the following sources: [1] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, *A Healthy Start: Begin Before Baby's Born* (accessed April 15, 2010): mchb.hrsa.gov [2] National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition, *You're a Parent!* (accessed April 15, 2010): hmhb.org

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