

Having a Healthy Baby

The 9 Week Visit

The miracle of birth is so amazing that it is hard to grasp. Although you don't look pregnant, your baby's development has been rapid. Already, the baby is floating in its amniotic sac which is attached at the placenta. An umbilical cord has formed which brings the baby nourishment from your body. Although your baby is only about half an inch in size by the 9th week, the baby's head, arms and legs are already forming.



Over the next several months your body will go through many changes as it adjusts to provide the perfect environment to nurture your baby. During your pregnancy there is much you can do to make sure that you and your baby stay healthy.

Regular Physician or Certified Nurse Midwife Visits: Your doctor and other health care providers are here to support you through your entire pregnancy—think of them as a part of your birth team. You play a most active role on this team. You consult this team regularly, but ultimately you are in charge of many key decisions throughout your pregnancy.

Regular visits with your obstetrician or certified nurse midwife (referred to as “practitioners” throughout these emailings) are important. Each visit focuses on different aspects of your health,

as well as that of your baby. Your practitioners will help you schedule a series of visits that meets your unique needs. *It is important to keep all of these appointments.*

Good Communication is Critical: If problems develop, there is much your practitioners can do to help you have a healthy pregnancy. Over the next several months you will learn what signs and symptoms indicate that your pregnancy

needs to be managed more closely with your practitioners. It will be very important that you communicate problems and unusual symptoms to him or her immediately. A timely response to potential problems greatly reduces any risk to you and your baby. It is also important to seriously consider your practitioner's advice on specific steps you may need to take to reduce risks.

Your 9 Week Visit: The nine week visit may vary somewhat. If you have already met with your practitioners you may have discussed some issues related to this pregnancy. If you have a history of complicated pregnancies, have diabetes or high blood pressure, or are on certain medications, you may have already started to receive early care.

This nine week visit may be your first appointment with your practitioner. This visit will probably include a general physical exam with a Pap smear. It is a

good time for you to discuss his or her basic philosophy about caring for your pregnancy and his or her availability. It is important to determine how to contact your practitioner and the clinic. Many needs during a pregnancy can come at any hour of the day. Your practitioners expect to meet your needs day or night. It is important for you to understand how to reach them 24 hours a day. Make sure you ask what is the best way to reach him or her and the clinic—including nights and weekends.

If you have had a previous cesarean section, this is a good time to discuss what your plans are for this pregnancy. Additionally, if you have any travel plans during this pregnancy, you can discuss what your practitioner's recommendations are.

You may have already been prescribed pre-natal vitamins—if not, your practitioner will probably recommend them at this visit.

It is very important to understand that certain lifestyle choices can have a dramatic impact on the health of your baby. Use of nicotine and alcohol during your pregnancy should be discussed at this early stage of your pregnancy. Use of other substances such as cocaine, marijuana, diazepam and many prescription drugs can also put your baby at risk. Your practitioner is the safest person with whom to discuss ways to avoid use of substances that can hurt you and your baby. Also, discuss any over-the-counter medications you might be taking since some may be a problem.



Your practitioner will probably ask a series of questions about your past and current health at this visit. If you are aware of any past genetic disorders that have affected your family, discuss this with your practitioner. If you work in an environment with potential hazards you should also talk about this.

At nine weeks it may be possible to hear your baby's heartbeat using a doptone.

Other Tests or Screenings: You will want to talk to your practitioner about his or her recommendations for genetic screening. Several new tests have emerged in the past couple of years that you may want to take advantage of. The first trimester screening (11½ - 13½ weeks) incorporates both an ultrasound and blood work. These tests pick up the relative risk for any of the major chromosomal defects particularly Down's syndrome (Trisomy 21) and Trisomy 18. Although not yet routinely offered in all offices, they will soon be available for all pregnancies. Some practitioners choose to do a "sequential screen" which includes the earlier ultrasound and blood work with a Quad Screen at 16 weeks. They then determine your relative risk based on all of these.

Many people worry that their baby could have a genetic problem. Genetic testing usually does not make sense unless both parents have a risk of carrying genes for specific disorders. If you have a family history of genetic disorders, it is important to share this information with your practitioner. When considering genetic risks, you want to ask the

following types of questions: 1) Do you or the baby's father have a congenital defect such as congenital heart disease? 2) Have either of you had a previous child with a genetic birth defect? 3) Do either of you have a family history of hemophilia, mental retardation or other genetic disorders?

Practitioners are now offering the more invasive genetic tests such as amniocentesis to any woman who wants one—not just those over age 35. If you want to do this, discuss it with your doctor. The relative risk for genetic disorders is lower for women under age 35, but it is still not zero.

Cystic Fibrosis testing is available now as well. Make sure you ask your practitioner about this at your first prenatal visit especially if you have a family history of this disease. The woman is tested first. If she tests positive, then the father needs to be tested as well. It takes a recessive gene from each parent to determine a high risk. The test picks up about 70% of cases.

Another test your practitioner may want to do is to screen for diabetes. He or she will have you drink some glucose water. An hour later you will have some blood drawn. If it tests positive, you will need to have another test done to determine if you are diabetic. These tests will be repeated again at 24 or 28 weeks. Sometimes people are diabetic while they are pregnant (gestational diabetes), even if they were not diabetic before. If this is the case, your practitioner will determine how best to treat you. After your baby is born, you may be tested again.

Your Body is Changing Rapidly: Your body is adjusting to provide the perfect environment for your baby. This can cause new demands and probably some

discomfort for you. Below is a description of some important things you can do to best nurture your baby.

Eating for Two: You are your baby's only source of nutrition during pregnancy. It is very important for your health, and your baby's development, that you eat what is best for both of you. By doing this you can help maintain your energy level, nourish your baby, and maintain your resistance to illness. Although you only need to eat about 300 additional calories a day to meet your baby's requirements, the kinds of foods you eat are very important. For the most part, eating good, nutritious foods is all that is required. Your practitioners can help you find high-quality information on nutrition during your pregnancy.

Remember that you are providing critical nourishment to your baby. Gaining some weight is an important part of this process. Even by nine weeks some women will begin to notice that clothes feel tight. This is normal. *Never start weight-loss diets during pregnancy since this can affect your baby's food supply.*

Get the rest you need: Being pregnant can place more demands on your body than you realize. You may feel more tired than usual. Try to get at least eight hours of sleep every night. If you feel fatigued during the day, allow yourself to take a nap. If you are working, arrange to take breaks when you need them.

Staying active: It is important to keep your body moving and in good shape during your pregnancy. Now may be a good time to start, or continue, a mild exercise program. Activities such as walking and swimming give your body a valuable work-out without putting undue stress on your system. The nine week visit is a perfect time to discuss the amount and

type of physical activity your practitioner would recommend for you. Some women may have problems during a pregnancy that require significant limitations in activity. If this occurs for you, it is important to follow your practitioner's instructions.

Nausea: Nausea, or “morning sickness” can actually happen at any time of day. This may only last during the first few months of your pregnancy. Although every woman's experience is unique, there are some common remedies that may help reduce nausea:

1. drink plenty of fluids
2. eat crackers in the morning before getting out of bed and get out of bed slowly
3. avoid foods and odors that make you nauseous
4. eat meals dry and then drink fluids about a half hour later
5. avoid going for long periods without eating
6. eat several small meals rather than a few large ones
7. avoid greasy or spicy foods
8. have a snack that includes high-protein foods before bed
9. if you are feeling nauseous, get some fresh air and sip soda water

The Advice You May Get From Others:

Your pregnancy is likely to get the attention of friends, relatives and co-workers. By nine weeks, you may have already heard “You look too big,” “You look too small,” “You ought to do this or that.” This is a time to smile and thank them for their concern and accept it as that and then go discuss any concerns you believe are legitimate with your practitioners.

Know When to Call Your Practitioner:

Write down the phone number for your clinic and practitioner. Keep this number with you all the time.

If any of the following things happen at any time during your pregnancy be sure to call as soon as possible:

- Pelvic pressure—the feeling that your baby is pushing down between your legs.
- Cramps that feel like your period
- If you are unable to keep down food or fluids
- If you have thoughts of harming yourself or panic attacks
- Vaginal itching or burning
- Sores or swelling around the vagina or genital areas
- Fever over 100°
- Pain or burning with urination
- Bleeding from your vagina
- Abdominal pain



Other Resources: Everyone has their favorite pregnancy and childbirth book(s). Your best resource for suggestions is your own doctor or nurse midwife. If they don't have any suggestions, check out your local library or bookstores. Friends will always have suggestions for you, but you may have slightly different criteria for what makes a book a good resource.

Sample questions for your 9 week visit:

- How do I get hold of you or the clinic if I have a question or an emergency?
- What do you consider an emergency?
- What prenatal vitamins should I take?
- Have I discussed any health issues I might have?
- Are there any family health issues that I need to be concerned about?
- Are any of my medications or is the environment I work in harmful to my baby?
- Can I hear my baby's heartbeat?
- How much weight should I gain?
- What kind of exercise can I safely do?
- Should I eat fish?

Other questions or concerns for your 9 week visit:

The more you understand

- How to stay healthy during your pregnancy
- How to protect the health of your developing baby
- How to best use and communicate with your practitioner to ensure a safe pregnancy and delivery

The more confident and comfortable you are likely to be. This knowledge can help you look forward to the best quality of life possible for you and your baby.

