

Early Prenatal Care

April 2025

What is prenatal care? Why is it important?

Prenatal care is the healthcare you receive while you are pregnant. The purpose of prenatal care is to monitor the progress of your pregnancy and the health of your baby. Receiving prenatal care can help identify if there are any potential pregnancy complications, how to prevent them, if possible, and can help identify potential genetic conditions, or birth defects.

Options for Prenatal Care



OBGyn—Specializes in prenatal care, pregnancy related issues, and labor and delivery

Family Physician—Sees patients from birth and throughout their lives. May have to refer to specialist for labor and delivery

Certified Nurse Midwife—Trained and licensed in their state to provide prenatal care and delivery

As part of prenatal care, it is also recommended to select a pediatrician for your baby before birth. This allows time to make an informed decision about which doctor to choose and can help navigate issues that may arise during the newborn screening.

How often?

Your doctor will give you a schedule for all the doctor's visits you should have while you are pregnant. However, unless the pregnancy is high risk, you'll likely follow this schedule:.

- About once a month for weeks 4 through 28
- Twice a month for weeks 28 through 36
- Weekly for weeks 36 to birth

For more information on prenatal care and high risk pregnancies, [click here](#).

Fast Facts

- Having good health and taking care of yourself will help your baby remain healthy, too!
- Lack of prenatal care can lead to your baby being born too early and other related complications.
- Babies of mothers who do not get prenatal care are three times more likely to have a low birth weight
- During prenatal care, it is recommended to select a pediatrician for your baby before birth!
- Group prenatal care is an option, too! To find a Centering program, please visit: [Centering Sites for IN](#)



What should you expect?

During the first prenatal visit, you can expect your doctor to:

- Ask about your health history including diseases, operations, or prior pregnancies
- Ask about your family's health history
- Do a complete physical exam, including a pelvic exam and Pap test
- Take your blood and urine for lab work
- Check your blood pressure, height, and weight
- Calculate your due date
- Answer your questions

Later prenatal visits will probably be shorter. Your doctor will check on your health and make sure the baby is growing as expected. Most prenatal visits will include:

- Checking your blood pressure
- Measuring your weight gain
- Measuring your abdomen to check your baby's growth (once you begin to show)
- Checking the baby's heart rate

Healthcare? Low-cost/Free options?

Hoosier Healthwise: [Hoosier Healthwise brochure](#)

HIP: [FSSA: HIP: Home](#)

My Healthy Baby: [My Healthy Baby](#)

Moms Helpline: [Health: MOMS Helpline: Moms Helpline](#)

MCH Resource Guide: **Coming Soon**

What should you ask during your prenatal care appointments?

- Is there a hotline line that I can call if I have questions?
- If I experience bleeding or cramping, who do I call?
- What do you consider an emergency?
- Will I need to change my habits regarding sex, exercise, nutrition, medication?
- When will my next prenatal visit be scheduled?
- What can I do now to set myself up for success with breastfeeding?
- What is newborn screening?
- What should I do to prepare for delivery? What should I expect after delivery?