

NutraSweet & Saccharin: NutraSweet is a sugar substitute made up of two amino acids linked together. When it is digested, it breaks down into the two amino acids and formaldehyde. Form-aldehyde in large quantities is a poison; however the quantity of formaldehyde produced from one soda with NutraSweet is much less than the amount found in naturally occurring foods, such as apple cider. Therefore, you do not need to avoid NutraSweet, but don't use it in excess. Saccharin, however, has been suggested to be a mutagen in animal studies; therefore we recommend that you avoid saccharin when possible. Diet soft drinks from fountain outlets usually have Saccharin instead of NutraSweet. At present, we would recommend that you avoid fat replacements, such as Simplese, since not enough is known about what happens with them in pregnancy.

Caffeine: More than 6 cups of coffee per day is associated with small birth weight babies and increased chance of high blood pressure in pregnancy. We recommend that you limit caffeine consumption to one cup of coffee per day, or the equivalent in tea, colas or chocolates. If you have high blood pressure or if you smoke, you should avoid caffeine altogether.

Listeria: Listeria is a rare bacteria occasionally found in some foods. It may be found in unpasteurized dairy products, especially imported soft cheeses. It may be on the external surfaces of fruits (especially melons) picked by migrant farm workers. If contracted, it may cause miscarriage or fetal death. We therefore recommend avoidance of imported (non-pasteurized) soft cheeses. Also avoid deli meats or heat them to steaming before eating. Wash all fruits carefully before cutting into them or eating them.

Smoking: Nicotine in tobacco smoke is known to cause premature placental aging, which may lead to miscarriage, preterm labor, small birth-weight babies and toxemia in pregnancy. The more you smoke, the more risk there is of problems in pregnancy. It is important to quit smoking, or if you can't do that, limit yourself to as few cigarettes per day as possible. Although second-hand smoke has a lot of the "tar" of smoking, it has less nicotine. If you do not smoke, try to avoid smoky areas, but do not worry about occasional exposure.

Exposure to Viruses: Exposure to Chicken Pox and Fifth's Disease (Parvovirus) is fairly common in any one who has children or works with young children. If you are exposed to Chicken Pox or Shingles, and you have had chicken pox in the past, you do not need to worry. If you have not had them, or if you are unsure whether or not you have had them and you are exposed, please call our office. We will then test your blood to see if you are susceptible. If you have a direct exposure to any one with Fifth's disease, also please call our office.

Mercury: Organic mercury compound may be found in many large fish, such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish. You should avoid these completely. Limit your intake of other cooked fishes to 12 ounces per week. Fish locally caught should be limited to 6 ounces per week. Mercury can cause neurological damage to the fetus. Canned tuna, no more than one serving per week, is thought to be safe.

THE WOMEN'S OB-GYN GROUP
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THE FIRST TRIMESTER

The first trimester of pregnancy is defined as the time from the first day of your last period until 13 weeks. We assume conception occurred two weeks after your last period began. You will be seen every four weeks during this time. We usually can hear the fetal heart with the Doppler by 10-14 weeks.

Problems in the first trimester:

Fatigue: the most common symptom. Try to keep up with your usual exercise routine, as this will ultimately make you feel better. Also try to get enough sleep at night. Fatigue usually improves by the 14th week, so you may want to put off vacations until that time.

Bleeding: another common problem, but one that may indicate complications. If you have only a little spotting, chances are that everything with the pregnancy will proceed normally. On the other hand, spotting may indicate impending miscarriage, or "spontaneous abortion". Approximately 20% of early pregnancies will miscarry before the 13th week. If miscarriage is going to occur, there is no way to stop it from happening. Most of the time, early miscarriage indicates that there is something wrong with the pregnancy, such as a chromosome problem with the fetus, or improper implantation of the fertilized egg.

If you do have spotting or light bleeding, call us to schedule an appointment for a pelvic exam and an ultrasound. If you have heavy bleeding (heavier than a normal period), strong cramping with bleeding, or see any pink or white tissue passed, call us immediately, as all these things may indicate a miscarriage in progress. Very early miscarriages (before the 7th week) usually do not require a D&C, but later ones usually do. If you have bleeding in the first trimester, but everything continues to proceed normally, your pregnancy is not "high risk", and you do not have any increased chance of any problems later on in pregnancy.

Cramping (without bleeding): This is normal in the first trimester of pregnancy. The cramps are due to the uterus stretching, and often feel like menstrual cramps. Call us if you have severe one-sided pain.

Urinary frequency: This is a common complaint, and is normal as long as you do not have any burning with urination. This is due to your enlarging uterus pressing on your bladder.

Headaches: Also occur more often in pregnancy. Tylenol (acetaminophen) is safe to take, but do not take aspirin or Ibuprofen. Headaches in the first trimester do not indicate any problem.



Nausea and Vomiting: "Morning sickness" may actually occur at any time of day, or even all day. The nausea and vomiting usually begins at 6 weeks, reaches a peak at 10 weeks, and resolves by 12-14 weeks. This does not cause any harm to the fetus. Try to eat frequent, small, high-carbohydrate meals, such as bread, pasta, rice and potatoes. Avoid spicy foods, greasy foods, or foods with a strong odor. If taking your prenatal vitamins seems to exacerbate the problem, try switching to an over-the-counter multivitamin until the 14th week. You may also want to try Emetrol, an over-the-counter syrup, to help control the nausea and vomiting. If your vomiting is so severe that you cannot keep even liquids down for 24 hours, then call us. You may need to receive intravenous liquids. We generally try to avoid prescribing any medication for nausea in the first trimester, unless the condition is actually threatening your health.

Colds: Not caused by pregnancy, but nevertheless a common problem in pregnancy. Colds, or upper-respiratory infections, do not harm the fetus. Try to drink plenty of fluids and get enough rest. You can take Tylenol for fevers and aches, and Sudafed (after 12 weeks) for congestion. You do not need antibiotics unless you develop another infection, such as bronchitis (cough and fever for one week), sinusitis (increasing sinus pain, fever, green drainage lasting more than a few days) or ear infection.

Leg Cramps: Leg cramps are not a sign of any complications. Make sure that you are getting enough calcium and potassium in your diet, and try to avoid muscle fatigue. When cramps occur, massage the muscle.

Answers to Common Questions:

Hair coloring and perms: There have never been any studies that demonstrate any problems from having your hair dyed or permed. Nevertheless, we recommend that you avoid dyes and perms until after the first trimester is over.

Painting: We recommend that you avoid the use of oil-based paints or urethane when pregnant. Latex paints are okay when used in a well-ventilated area, but try to avoid direct contact.

Toxoplasmosis: A small proportion of cats may carry a parasite known as toxoplasmosis. If a pregnant woman catches this disease during pregnancy, it may cause birth defects in the fetus. Toxoplasmosis may also be found in raw meats. If you have a cat that hunts or eats raw meats, you should either wear gloves while handling the litter box, and wash carefully after handling anything that may be soiled with cat feces, or have your husband do these chores. Try not to inhale the dust created by emptying the litter box. The cat cannot transmit the disease to you by merely living in the household with you. Women that garden, whether or not they have cats, should be careful about hand washing after gardening. Likewise, you should be careful when handling raw meats: Do not contaminate raw vegetables by using the same cutting board as you use for raw meats. Wash your hands thoroughly after handling raw meats.

Alcohol: We know that in some instances, drinking alcohol can cause a condition known as "fetal alcohol syndrome". This syndrome is seen most often in the babies of women who consume relatively large quantities of alcohol. However, it is not known whether there is a "safe" amount of alcohol that can be consumed without causing any increased chance of fetal effects.