

Obstetric Patient Letter

Congratulations on your pregnancy! We are pleased that you have chosen our practice to care for you during your pregnancy and deliver your baby.

As you may know, the practice you have selected consists of all female physicians. Gynecologic patients are usually followed by one physician for routine office care, although any one of the doctors may cover for urgent or emergency care. Obstetric patients are followed by all of the Ob physicians, as any one of the Ob physicians may be on call when obstetric patients deliver. We have admitting privileges at St. Agnes Hospital, and most of our surgeries or hospital admissions will be scheduled there. You should schedule your visits so that you meet and feel comfortable with all the Ob physicians, as each one has an equal opportunity to deliver your baby. St. Agnes Hospital has both a well-baby nursery and a newborn intensive care nursery (NICU). There are occasions, however, where either the NICU is full, or the baby may need facilities and personnel not available at St. Agnes, such as neonatal cardiac surgery. In these instances, it may be appropriate to transfer the mother before delivery to a "tertiary care" center, such as the University of Maryland Hospital.

OB visits are scheduled every 4 weeks until 28 weeks, every 2 weeks until 36 weeks, and every week after that until delivery. If you have regular 28-day cycles, your due date or "EDC" is 40 weeks after the first day of your last menstrual period (LMP). This is 9 months plus one week by the calendar, or 10 "lunar" months. To avoid the confusion between calendar months and lunar months, we refer to the length of pregnancies by weeks. Also, you may note that conception is assumed to occur approximately 2 weeks after your LMP. Thus, the actual age of the fetus is really 2 weeks less than what we refer to as the "gestational age". We may change your EDC based upon the size of your uterus at your first examination or an ultrasound performed later.

At the first OB visit, a complete history and physical exam will be performed, along with a pap test and cervical surveillance cultures. The enclosed genetic screening questionnaire will be reviewed, and appropriate tests will be discussed. Routine laboratory tests include the following: hemoglobin, hematocrit, blood type and RH status, antibody screen, serologic test for syphilis, hepatitis B screen, HIV, rubella titer and urine culture. Other tests may be indicated depending on your medical, obstetrical and genetic history.

We wish to review a few "Do's and Don'ts" before your first visit: During the first trimester, it is especially important to avoid exposing the developing embryo to hazardous substances. Avoid all X-rays, unless you have a life or limb threatening emergency. Avoid all medications, except Acetaminophen (Tylenol) for headaches, unless discussed with our office or another physician first. If you are already on a medication for a preexisting medical condition, please call our office to find out whether you should continue it or discontinue it. It may be dangerous to your health to abruptly stop some medications. You may take vitamin supplements but do not take more than 100% of the RDA of synthetic vitamin A. You should also avoid alcohol, cigarettes and high temperatures.

You may continue your current exercise regimen, but do not let your pulse exceed 140 beats per minute, and do not push yourself to exhaustion. As your pregnancy progresses, you should stop high-impact exercises in favor of low impact. Avoid becoming over heated and avoid hot tubs.

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We will discuss all of this and more at your first visit. Allow approximately one hour for this visit. Subsequent visits will be approximately 10 minutes each and will entail weight and blood pressure measurement, urine test and fetal heart check. Additional in-office testing such as sonograms and non-stress tests will be scheduled at the physicians' discretion, according to individual need. We welcome spouses/partners at any visits but they should definitely try to come for the initial sonogram (done between 18 and 22 weeks) and the 36-week labor talk. Well-behaved siblings are welcome at the return visits, but the first visit may be too long for younger children to tolerate.

We encourage patients and their partners to participate in childbirth classes. We would recommend classes by ASPO/Lamaze or ICEA teachers. Local childbirth educators and St. Agnes Hospital offer these classes. Susan Weyer, a nurse educator and lactation consultant, as well as a labor and delivery nurse, also offers classes in our office.

Please fill in the enclosed forms and bring them in with you when you come in for your visit. Any questions you do not understand will be reviewed with you at your visit. If you are a member of an HMO or PPO, a referral form may be required for insurance coverage for the visit. Please check your insurance plan.

Our office is located in the building at the corner of Harpers Farm Road and Little Patuxent Parkway, near Howard County Community College. From the Columbia Mall, take Little Patuxent Parkway toward the HCC College. Turn right at the light at Harpers Farm Road, then the next left, and the next left into the parking lot. We look forward to seeing you. If you are unable to keep your appointment for any reason, please call to reschedule. In case of inclement weather, please go to our web site www.beh-ob-gyn.com, and click on "Notices" to find out the status of the office opening and closing times.

Yours truly,

The Women's Ob-Gyn Group