

Guidelines for a healthy pregnancy

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(HealthDay)—If you're pregnant you already know the importance of eating a healthful diet and taking prenatal vitamins, including folic acid and possibly B12 and iron supplements.

What not to do isn't always clear, however.

There's no doubt about the hazards of smoking—to you and baby.

But what about alcohol? While one drink during the course of your pregnancy is unlikely to affect baby, there's no established safe level of alcohol consumption. Even [moderate drinking](#) can raise the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth and [birth defects](#), and affect baby's brain development. Get help if you can't quit drinking on your own.

Caffeine can affect baby's heart rate and might raise miscarriage risk. Your doctor may be OK with you having up to 200 milligrams a day. That's about 16 ounces of brewed coffee or 4 cups of brewed tea. Be even more cautious about herbal teas because there's just not enough research to say that any herbs are safe when you're pregnant.

Follow a healthful diet, but take a few steps to avoid risks from food.

Food Safety During Pregnancy:

- Wash all raw fruits and vegetables before eating or cooking.
- Avoid all raw sprouts, like alfalfa and mung beans, because of disease-causing bacteria. Cook them thoroughly.
- Limit your exposure to mercury in fish. Choose salmon, canned light tuna and shrimp, but no more than 12 ounces a week. Avoid all swordfish, [king mackerel](#) and shark.
- Avoid deli meats, raw or undercooked fish and meat, and unpasteurized cheeses. Many carry the risk for listeria.

High [blood pressure](#) is particularly problematic when you're pregnant. Blood pressure above 140 over 90 is called pre-eclampsia, a serious condition that can affect brain function and cause seizures or coma. Pre-

eclampsia can raise your risk for future heart health issues, so stay on top of regular wellness exams throughout your life if it develops.

More information: The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development has detailed information on [promoting a healthy pregnancy](#).

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