

Live Well to  
Learn Well

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Learning you are pregnant can create excitement and eagerness, as well as generate questions and concerns.

This fact sheet is intended to address issues that may be on your mind between the time you learn you are pregnant and when you have your first appointment with an obstetrician or midwife. Cornell Health can assist you with your early pregnancy health needs and recommend a pregnancy care practice in the community. Be sure to tell one of our health care providers if you have known medical conditions that you think may affect your pregnancy.

While you are waiting for your first prenatal care appointment, taking care of yourself is important. Below are some tips to help you navigate the next few weeks.

### Body cues

Hormonal changes can be dramatic in early pregnancy. Some people experience few symptoms of pregnancy while others experience many, including nausea, breast tenderness, or an overwhelming feeling of fatigue. The need to urinate frequently is common, as are constipation, mood changes, and heartburn. Usually, these symptoms are mild.

More severe symptoms such as painful urination, daily vomiting, severe headache, pelvic or abdominal pain, or worsening mood changes should be discussed with your health care provider.

### Nourishment

Consider these tips to manage symptoms and get the nourishment you need.

- Eat smaller servings of nutritious food more frequently throughout the day during early pregnancy. Nausea is sometimes a symptom of hunger, so consider eating a healthy snack every 2-3 hours. Carry fresh fruit, crackers, protein bars or other healthy foods with you. If nausea is worse in the morning, keep some snacks by your bedside and eat a little before getting up.
- Eat a wide variety of foods throughout your pregnancy. If you follow a special diet, consider meeting with a nutritionist at Cornell Health to discuss your unique needs during pregnancy. Pregnancy is not a time to diet. Your obstetrician or midwife will help you monitor healthy weight gain during your pregnancy.
- Start taking a daily prenatal vitamin or prescription supplement (can be taken as early as 3 months prior to conception). Prenatal



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supplements containing at least 400mcg of folic acid taken every day both before and during pregnancy can help to reduce the occurrence of some birth defects such as spina bifida. Eating foods such as dark leafy vegetables, liver, fruit and whole grains can also supply a type of folic acid.

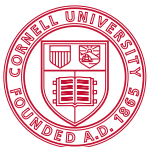
- Sip on water throughout the day to help you manage constipation and nausea. Drinking lots of fluid all at once can make nausea worse, so consider drinking a few sips every 15 minutes between snacks. Try to stay hydrated enough to keep your urine a pale-yellow color.
- Monitor nausea and vomiting. If you are concerned that nausea or vomiting is preventing you from getting the right nutrition, come to Cornell Health to discuss more ways to manage the symptoms.

### Physical & mental health

Prioritizing self-care can help make your pregnancy healthier.

- Rest when you are tired. Consider taking naps when you are able.
- Try moderate exercise such as brisk walking, swimming, or yoga (excluding hot yoga).
- Talk with your health care provider about seasonal vaccines and boosters, including the flu vaccine.

You may experience a range of emotions during this time, including feeling scared, excited, anxious, exhilarated, and sad ... sometimes all in one day! Not only is your body adjusting to changes, but you may also be adjusting to the idea of parenting and how it may affect your relationships, career, finances or academics.



Remember to be kind to yourself and honor your self-care needs. If you need support, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) offers counseling, consultation, and referrals (available to students only). Campus-wide options for support can be found at *mentalhealth.cornell.edu*.

## Safety

It is not known how much alcohol is safe to consume during pregnancy, so it is advised to avoid alcohol all together to prevent potential harm to the developing fetus. If you drink caffeine, do so in moderation. Some studies have shown higher amounts of caffeine are linked to miscarriage or low birth weight in babies. Smoking tobacco can cause miscarriage, low birth-weight babies, and other health problems. If stopping drinking alcohol or smoking will be hard for you, talk with your health care provider about support available at Cornell Health or in the community.

Be cautious about medications. If you are currently using a medication, check with Cornell Health to make sure it is safe to use while pregnant. Some non-prescription medications used to treat colds, headaches, or stomach upset can cause problems in early pregnancy. Others are considered safe. If you are unsure, call Cornell Health before beginning any new medicine or herbal product.

The following medications can be safely taken during pregnancy:

- Tylenol (acetaminophen, paracetamol) can be used for a headache, fever or pain.
- Sudafed (pseudoephedrine), plain Robitussin (not DM) and Cepacol lozenges can be used for cold symptoms such as a sore throat or stuffy nose.
- Benedryl (diphenhydramine) can be used for allergy symptoms.
- Metamucil can be used for constipation.
- Emetrol can be used for nausea and vomiting.
- Imodium (loperamide) can be used for diarrhea

**Do not take:** Ibuprofen, Advil, aspirin, Aleve, Pepto-Bismol, Alka-Seltzer, or any medicines that contain these. Many cold medicines have them in their ingredients, so check the label before using.

Be sure to tell any health care provider you are seeing that you are pregnant. They will need to consider your pregnancy when recommending medications, x-rays, or other treatments.

## Insurance coverage

Because all insurance policies differ, be sure to check with your insurance plan about which pregnancy-related expenses you'll be responsible for, and which are covered. Often, a toll-free number is provided on the back of an insurance card. If you are enrolled in Cornell's Student Health Plan (SHP or SHP+), the Office of Student Benefits can help answer questions (*studenthealthbenefits.cornell.edu*).

Additionally, the Tompkins County Department of Social Services' Medicaid Office (607-274-5330) can help determine whether you are eligible to receive additional assistance through Medicaid.

## Symptoms of concern

Sometimes pregnancies don't progress to full-term. As many as 1 in every 4 early pregnancies end in miscarriage. Sometimes there are problems with the embryo's chromosomes; sometimes a fertilized egg does not implant correctly into the uterus. Often, no reason can be found for a miscarriage.

Symptoms such as vaginal bleeding, uterine cramping, or back pain can be signs of early miscarriage, but not always. Approximately 20% of women will have some light bleeding in the first trimester and continue to have a healthy pregnancy.

- If you experience any of these symptoms, you can call Cornell Health 24/7 for consultation (607-255-5155).
- If your bleeding is heavy (more than 1 pad every hour) or cramping is more than a menstrual cramp, go to the Cayuga Medical Center (or other hospital) emergency department.