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## The unofficial guide to pregnancy

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As a woman, you make many decisions during your pregnancy that may seem mundane.

Whether it is deciding to read the latest and greatest "how-to" book or opting to follow a diet strictly comprised of organic goodness, you as the expectant mom have many choices and decisions to make.

In today's world of information overload, pregnant women are being told to "do this, not that" daily making it a challenge to figure out how to properly manage the 40 +/- weeks of pregnancy.

Truth be told, with regard to pregnancy and childbirth, there is no one right or wrong way to go about it all, but there are standards that should be followed.

As an obstetrician, it is my goal to ensure a healthy pregnancy and delivery, all while establishing a trusting relationship with my expectant moms and their partners.

### Prenatal checkups

The first order of business is to ensure that you have an obstetrician. Some women choose based on a friend's recommendation, insurance cov-

erage or location preference.

Whatever drives the decision, know that the sooner you have an obstetrician, the better as these appointments assist in the monitoring of your health as well as the progress of your pregnancy. You will meet with your doctor every month or so depending on your needs.

As you get closer to your due date, these visits will increase to every two weeks and ultimately every week. Use these visits as an opportunity to establish a strong relationship with your provider. Have candid discussions about your wishes for labor and delivery and be sure to address any concerns or questions you may have about your pregnancy.

### Eat right

Pregnant women constantly hear, "you're eating for two now," while this statement is somewhat true, it does not mean that you should double your caloric intake. In reality, a pregnant woman should only increase her calorie consumption by approximately 300 calories.

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## PREGNANCY: Tips to make 9 months easier

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When making food choices, you should be mindful of where your calories are coming from. Choose a diet that consists of well-balanced meals and includes proteins, iron, calcium and folic acid. While indulging every now and then is okay, you should avoid foods with "empty calories" such as candy, soda, ice cream and fried foods. Remember, what you consume serves as the main nutrition source for your growing baby.

### Exercise during pregnancy

Exercise during your pregnancy can assist in reducing back pain, easing constipation and decreasing your risk for developing gestational diabetes.

It can also improve your overall fitness level with the added benefit of aiding in weight loss after your baby is born. As with every exercise program, it is important to have a discussion with your doctor to ensure that is considered safe for you and your pregnancy.

Unless your obstetrician advises otherwise, guidelines that moms-to-be should exercise, i.e.: walk, swim or cycle for at least 30 minutes per day.

### Quit smoking & drinking alcohol

The dangers of smoking and drinking excessive

amounts of alcohol while pregnant are well documented.

If you are a smoker, know that smoking exposes your baby to harmful and toxic chemicals and can further result in less oxygen and nutrients delivered to your baby.

Babies born to mothers who smoke tend to be smaller and are likely to develop other health conditions such as asthma. Smoking mothers are also at a higher risk for preterm labor. If you are pregnant and smoking, tell your doctor. He or she will work with you to find support groups and quitting programs.

Drinking alcohol when pregnant poses its own set of dangers, as the unborn baby's liver is not equipped to breakdown alcohol. Drinking alcohol while pregnant can cause physical, mental, behavioral and learning disabilities for a baby.

Pregnancy offers expectant moms a unique opportunity to assess their smoking and drinking habits for at least nine months and hopefully longer.

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