

What to expect at each prenatal visit

What to expect at each prenatal visit is a gradual and exciting introduction to the newest member of your family! Over the course of your pregnancy, you will see, hear and feel your new baby. At delivery, you will finally be able to put a face to the precious child you've come to know.

At the first visit, you will begin to establish a new rapport with your doctor. Discussion will begin with the date of your last period to establish your due date. Your health history will be reviewed. If you have any medical problems such as high blood pressure or diabetes, these issues will be addressed. Modifications to the number or frequency of visits and ultrasounds will be made.

Various outside factors in your life need to be addressed. For example, if you have cats, we ask you not to change their litter box or get too snuggly with them. If you travel for business or have a particularly strenuous job, this should be discussed.

Some basic rules of thumb are:

- * Check with us on all prescription drugs.
- * Stay away from caffeine, alcohol and tobacco.
- * Keep exercise to 30 minutes a day maximum for aerobics and keep your pulse under 140 beats per minute.
- * Travel is okay on an individual basis, up to about 30 weeks.

After going over this information, you will receive an exam. A breast check and pap smear will be done, as well as cultures for bacteria and blood work to check your blood type and count, to rule out any sexually transmitted diseases, and the first part of your screening to check for Spina Bifida, Down's syndrome and other chromosome related problems.

Now for the most exciting part: The ultrasound to see your little white dot! Depending on how far along you are, you may see a heartbeat, arm and leg buds, and sometimes even spontaneous movement of the baby.

The next visits are every four weeks, up to 30 weeks gestation. They are quick and easy. Each time, your blood pressure, weight, and urine are checked. Your tummy is measured for growth and the heart beat is heard (through quick ultrasound). This enables us to ensure you of adequate growth and determine that no problems are arising from your changing hormones.

At 16 weeks gestation, we will do the second part of your blood test to check for spina bifida, down's syndrome, and other chromosome related problems. If the test result is abnormal, or if you are 35 years old or over, you may choose to have genetic testing. Dr. Rehberg will discuss this with you if appropriate. Again, blood work is done at 26-30 weeks to screen for diabetes in everyone.

During this time, movement will become apparent around 20 weeks. This is the time to plan your birthing classes, looking for pediatricians, and starting to get your nursery ready at home.

At 30-32 weeks, your visits increase to every two weeks. Because more hormones are produced as the pregnancy progresses, the risk of problems also increases. The visits will not change much in activity. At 36 weeks, you're on the downhill slide. Visits take place weekly. The same checks are done, but now an additional test for Group B Strep is done. Your cervix will usually be checked each week in the hope that of progress toward labor. These weekly visits continue until you go into labor or induction is scheduled.

And then, it feels like it all happened so fast. The baby is here, and you have a face to behold and fingers and toes to count! But it is just beginning—the diapers, the sleepless nights, and then they are asking to borrow the car keys.