

Ongoing Healthcare

During pregnancy, don't forget to see your healthcare provider for ongoing concerns, like chronic illnesses.

Do you have a chronic illness?

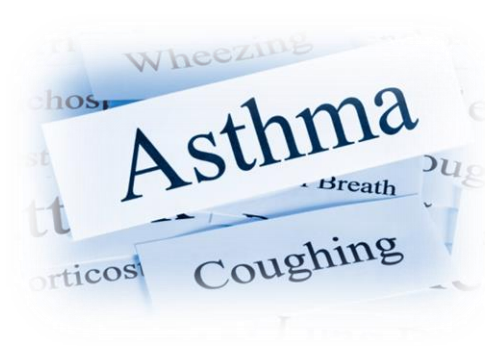
If you are living with a chronic illness, talk to your healthcare providers. “Chronic” means you will have the illness your whole life. Examples of chronic diseases are diabetes, epilepsy, and asthma. Your healthcare provider will help you manage your illness and medications during your pregnancy. During pregnancy, your healthcare provider may need to see you often. Your medications may need to be changed.

Asthma

If you have asthma, you may see an increase in your symptoms during your pregnancy. Work with your healthcare providers to make sure your asthma is under control. It is safe to use asthma medication during pregnancy. Avoid smoke; it may make your asthma worse.

If your asthma cannot be controlled, it may increase the risk that your baby will be born underweight.

A common symptom of pregnancy is acid reflux. This can cause heartburn. Acid reflux can make asthma worse.



Diabetes

Your blood sugar levels may change during pregnancy. Monitor your sugar levels carefully. See your healthcare providers, including your dietician, if you need help staying healthy.

Insulin is not harmful to your baby. It is safe to use regardless of if you are using a pump, needles, or pills.

Diabetes increases your risk of having a big baby. This can make it harder to deliver your baby. You may need to have an induced labour or a caesarean section. Diabetes can also increase the risk of your baby dying before she is born.



Heart disease

If you have heart disease, ask your healthcare providers for a referral to a cardiologist.

Epilepsy

Pregnancy may increase the number of seizures you have. It might also make the seizures more severe. Severe seizures may be fatal for you and your baby.

Seizures during labour and delivery may be harmful to you and your baby. Work with your healthcare providers to create a delivery plan.

Keep taking your epilepsy medications and follow the advice of your healthcare provider. Your medications may be changed.



High blood pressure

If you have high blood pressure, it is important to keep it under control during pregnancy. Talk to your healthcare provider about monitoring your blood pressure.

HIV

HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) can be passed from mother to child. However, it is possible to have a healthy baby.

HIV is a virus that damages the immune system and can lead to AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). People can live a healthy, long life being HIV positive if they get treatment and care.

HIV can be passed from mother to baby during pregnancy, delivery, or after birth.

Mothers living with HIV can pass the virus to their babies in three ways.

1. The placenta joins the mother and baby. Food and oxygen reach the baby through the placenta. HIV can pass through the placenta from the mother to baby.
2. The baby can come into contact with his mother's blood while being born.
3. HIV is found in breast milk. The virus can be passed to the baby during breastfeeding.

HIV testing is part of your prenatal blood tests. You can refuse the test. However, HIV does not discriminate. If you have had sex, you are at risk. If your healthcare provider does not offer the test, you can ask for it.



If a mother with HIV gets good medical care and treatment, there is less than a 2% chance of passing HIV onto her baby. A mother with HIV can have a healthy baby.

If you are HIV positive, you can stay healthy when you are pregnant.

- Find a healthcare provider who knows about HIV and pregnancy.
- Follow the advice of your healthcare provider.
- Stay on all medications given to you.

One of the ways that HIV can be passed from you to your baby is through breast milk. If you are HIV positive, it is recommended that you do not breastfeed.

Free formula is available in Saskatchewan for women living with HIV. You can call the numbers listed below to ask questions about the Saskatchewan Infant Formula program.

- Prince Albert: 306-765-6535
- Regina: 306-766-3915
- Saskatoon: 306-665-1477

Mental health concerns

If you have a history of mental health concerns, tell your healthcare provider. You may be at risk of developing mental health concerns during or after pregnancy. Your healthcare provider may refer you to someone who works in this area and can help.

Do not be afraid to talk to your healthcare provider. Mental health concerns are common. Your healthcare provider will help you develop a plan so you can spot the early warning signs. This plan should be shared with those close to you. The earlier you seek care, the better your recovery.

If you are on medication for mental health concerns, do not stop taking it. Talk to your healthcare provider. They may need to switch your medication. They might also need to change your dose.

Obesity

If you are obese, you have an increased chance of having problems with your pregnancy. One of the risks includes having your baby too early. Talk to your healthcare provider about your risks.

Should I get the influenza vaccination (flu shot)?

Influenza is the flu. It spreads from one person to another through sneezing or coughing. There are several different types (strains) of the flu virus.

The flu causes symptoms that include feeling tired, fever, sore throat, cough, headaches, chills, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

The influenza vaccination (flu shot) is free in Saskatchewan. Influenza vaccines protect against different types (strains) of the flu every year. Even if you had a vaccination last year, you still need one this year.



During pregnancy, your immune system is weaker than usual. Your immune system is what fights illnesses in your body. Pregnant women are at risk of complications due to flu. These complications may cause women to have their babies too early.

Babies under the age of six months cannot get the influenza vaccination. If you get the influenza vaccine when you are pregnant, both you and your baby are protected.

It is safe to get the influenza vaccine any time during pregnancy. Those who will be in contact with your baby should also be immunized.

Why are vaccinations important when you are pregnant?

Some diseases can be harmful to you and your baby when you are pregnant. Vaccines can protect you and your baby from these diseases. Early in your pregnancy make sure that your vaccinations are up-to-date. Your immunity to diseases during pregnancy protects your baby until he is 6 months of age. Breastmilk also provides some immunity for your baby.

Many vaccines are safe to get during pregnancy. Your healthcare providers will know which are safe. All vaccines are safe to get while breastfeeding.

