

Ongoing Healthcare

During pregnancy, don't forget to see your healthcare providers 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 that you will have the illness your whole life. Examples of chronic diseases are diabetes, epilepsy, and asthma. Your healthcare providers will help you manage your illness and medications during your pregnancy. During pregnancy, your healthcare providers 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 and other triggers that can 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. Talk to your healthcare providers if you are experiencing symptoms of heartburn or acid reflux.



Diabetes

Your blood sugar levels may change during pregnancy. Monitor your sugar levels carefully. See your healthcare providers, including a 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. Uncontrolled diabetes can also increase the risk of your baby dying before birth.



Heart disease

If you have heart disease, ask your healthcare providers for a referral to a cardiologist if you do not already have one.

Epilepsy

If you have epilepsy, pregnancy may increase the number of seizures you have. It might also make the seizures more severe. Severe seizures may be life-threatening 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 medications and follow the advice of your healthcare providers. 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 providers about monitoring your blood pressure.

HIV

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

HIV is a virus that can cause harm to the immune system and can lead to AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome). People can live a healthy, long life with HIV 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 the 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 you an HIV test, you can ask for it.



If a mother with HIV gets good medical care and treatment, there is less than a 1% chance of passing HIV onto the baby. A mother with HIV can have a healthy baby.

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

- Find healthcare providers who know about HIV and pregnancy.
- Follow the advice of your healthcare providers.
- 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: 306-655-1783

Mental health concerns

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

Do not be afraid to talk to your healthcare providers. Mental health concerns are common. Your healthcare providers 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 providers. They may need to switch your medication. They might also need to change your dose.

Weight gain during pregnancy

If you gain too little or too much weight during pregnancy, it can cause problems for you and your baby. Talk to your healthcare providers about healthy weight gain in pregnancy and 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.

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.

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.

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 they are 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. Most vaccines are also safe to get while breastfeeding.

