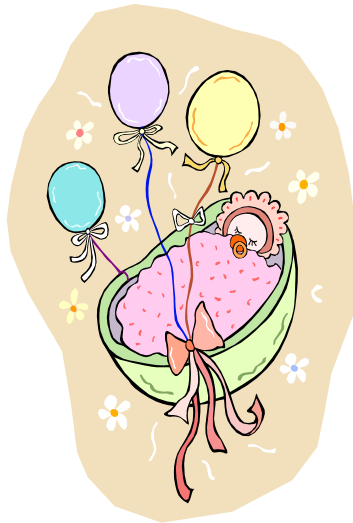


# **ANTENATAL CARE**

**ADVICE AND INFORMATION**



**The Exchange Surgery**  
**020 3474 6410**

## AM I PREGNANT?

If you think you may be pregnant, or you are unsure and would like the pregnancy confirmed, you can get a pregnancy test

- By buying a home testing kit
- By asking at reception in the practice. The receptionists will give you a pot to do a urine sample. The nurse will test it at the end of their morning surgery. Please leave a contact telephone number for them to call you back with the result.
- Streatham Hill sexual health clinic at 41 Streatham Hill provides a walk-in service for pregnancy testing, contraception and treatment and advice re sexually transmitted infections. For their opening hours please look at: <https://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/our-services/sexual-health/clinics/streatham-hill/overview.aspx> or ring 020 3049 4006

For your pregnancy test you will need a sample of your urine. This should be in a clean jar. You can ask reception for a urine pot.

If you are unhappy with your pregnancy and unsure whether you want to continue with it, you can call 0845 730 4030 to make an appointment at a local clinic to talk to a counsellor

## WHAT TO DO NEXT

Once you have confirmed you are pregnant with a test and you've decided to continue with it, you need to arrange a 'booking' appointment with the midwife. **All our local hospitals accept SELF REFERRAL – please look online** (the forms are on our website [theexchangesurgery.com](http://theexchangesurgery.com)). This appointment will give you the opportunity to plan your pregnancy care.

## **SOME EARLY PROBLEMS**

Unfortunately not all pregnancies continue. About 1 in 5 pregnancies will end in miscarriage before the 12<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy.

A little spotting of blood in early pregnancy is quite common. Often these pregnancies lead to a healthy full term baby.

However, if at any stage you experience bleeding or pain you should contact your GP when we are open, or when we are shut, you can telephone 111.

If the bleeding is heavy or the pain severe you can call 999 or go directly to a local hospital

- At St Thomas' Hospital you should go to the emergency Gynaecology Clinic which is open 8-6.30 Mon-Fri and 9.30-3.15 at weekends. Outside these hours go to A&E
- At St George's, King's College Hospital or Croydon University Hospital, you should go to A& E, who may re-direct you to an Early Pregnancy Assessment Unit, depending if it is open or not

It can be very upsetting for you to have a miscarriage. It is important to have someone to talk to. Talk to the people around you, because if your friends and family don't know what's going on they cannot help. At any time you can contact your GP, [The Miscarriage Association](#) on 01924 200 799 or the [National Childbirth Trust](#) on 0300 330 0700 can also offer help and support.

If you, your partner, or someone in your family has a history of a hereditary illness (e.g. cystic fibrosis), you may wish to discuss the possible risks with a counsellor. The Genetics department can be contacted at Guy's Hospital on 020 7188 3164 by your GP, midwife or yourself.

## **LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF IN EARLY PREGNANCY**

***Folic Acid*** is a vitamin and should ideally be taken from before you conceive up to the 12th week of pregnancy. Taking Folic Acid has been shown to help the fetus develop a healthy brain and spinal cord. It is recommended that you take 400 mcg of Folic Acid daily up until you are 12 weeks pregnant, except if you are on anti-epileptic drugs, when you should take 5mg a day. You can buy it at your pharmacy. Don't worry if you have only started taking Folic Acid after finding out you are pregnant. It is still worth taking it until your 12<sup>th</sup> week.

***Vitamin D*** is a vitamin, found in oily fish, eggs, meat, and breakfast cereals, that is needed to help the baby's bones develop and to keep the mother's bones healthy. You may be at risk of a shortage of Vitamin D if you are from Asian, African, Caribbean or Middle Eastern family origin, if you have limited exposure to sunlight, or if you eat a diet low in vitamin D, or if you are overweight (BMI > 30 Kg/m<sup>2</sup>). If this is the case, we advise that you take a supplement of 400 iu or 10 mcg of Vitamin D per day. You can buy this from your pharmacist.

Most common brands of pregnancy supplement include folic acid and Vitamin D.

***Smoking*** during pregnancy causes your baby to have less oxygen and babies of smokers are often smaller and can be born prematurely. Smoking whilst pregnant can affect your baby's lung and brain development. It is also thought to be one of the contributing factors in cot death. Remember it is never too late to give up or cut down. You can ask your GP or midwife to refer you to the Stop Smoking service for pregnancy mothers, who will give

you one to one support. [Lambeth Stop smoking service](#) is on 0800 856 3409.

Research shows that heavy or frequent drinking of **alcohol** during pregnancy can seriously harm your baby's development. It is better and safer not to drink but 1 or 2 units of alcohol a week is not thought to do any harm - this is equivalent to 1 small glass of wine or half a pint of lager a week. Please don't worry if you drunk some alcohol in early pregnancy, before you knew you were pregnant, the chances are that everything will be fine. However, if you are concerned speak to your midwife or GP. For more help and advice please phone Drinkline on 0300 123 1110. You can also contact [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) on 0800 917 7650.

Most **illegal drugs** are harmful in pregnancy. If you are concerned about illegal drug use please contact [FRANK](#) on 0300 123 6600. Your doctor or midwife can advise you further. Any information that you give will be treated in confidence in order to help you and your baby.

Some prescribed **medicines** can be harmful to the unborn baby, so it is best to check with your pharmacist before getting pregnant if you take any form of regular medication. To be on the safe side always check with your pharmacist before taking any pills or medication during pregnancy. It is also wise to get the advice of a specialist before using aromatherapy, homoeopathic or herbal remedies.

Sometimes, sadly, pregnancy can be a time when **violence** in a relationship can begin or get worse. If you are being hurt or threatened, or feeling unsafe or afraid of your partner, ex-partner or anyone else, please talk to your midwife, GP or any of the hospital doctors. They will be concerned and can give you further information and support. Alternatively you can contact the freephone 24hr [National Domestic Violence Helpline](#) on 0808 2000

247, [Rape Crisis](#) on 0808 802 9999 (daily 12noon – 2:30pm and 7 – 9:30pm) or the [Samaritans](#) on 08457 90 90 90 (or free of charge on 116 123).

Moderate ***exercise*** is healthy in pregnancy. Aim for 150 minutes of gentle exercise a week. Always ensure if you go to a class, that the instructor is aware that you are pregnant. Swimming is particularly recommended. Aqua-aerobics classes are offered in many of the local leisure centres at a reasonable price. For women who are used to taking vigorous exercise it would be wise to slow down gradually and exclude high impact activities or contact sports altogether. Don't exhaust yourself. You will find that you naturally slow down as your pregnancy progresses.

It is important to have a healthy ***diet*** while you are trying to conceive and right through your pregnancy. Eating enough fruit and vegetables will give your baby the vitamins and minerals it needs to grow and cutting down on sugary foods will help prevent diabetes. There are certain foods that you should avoid. These include un-pasteurized, blue veined and soft ripened cheeses, food containing raw eggs, liver and pate containing liver. The Department of health recommends avoiding peanuts if you have a family history of allergies particularly eczema and asthma. If you have any concerns please speak to your midwife or GP. You could also ring [Tommy's Pregnancy Line](#) on 0800 0147 800.

It is also important to avoid putting on too much weight. You are more at risk of complications in pregnancy if your BMI is >30 Kg/m<sup>2</sup>. You should avoid putting on more than 10 Kg over the course of the pregnancy, and if you are already overweight at conception, ideally you should put on less. However, you should not excessively restrict your diet. For more advice, speak to your GP or midwife.

Gums sometimes bleed during pregnancy. This is because hormonal changes in your body make your gums more sensitive. Bleeding is made worse by the build up of plaque on the teeth. It is important to brush your teeth regularly and carefully. Make sure you advise your dentist if you are pregnant and having treatment as X-rays could be harmful to your unborn baby. **Dental treatment** is free during pregnancy and until a year after your baby's birth. Your midwife or GP will be able to give you the appropriate certificate ([Maternity Exemption Certificate](#)). Keep your receipt if you have treatment before you receive your certificate, so you can claim you money back.

**Toxoplasmosis** can be passed from undercooked meats, garden soil and vegetables and from cat litter. Although a rare disease in the UK it is harmful to the unborn baby so it is important to cook meats thoroughly, wash all fruit and vegetables well and always wear gloves or wash your hands thoroughly after handling cat litter or touching garden soil. You can also call [Tommy's Pregnancy Line](#) on 0800 0147 800 for further information.

It is important to check whether you have been immunised against **rubella** (German measles) as coming into contact with someone who has it or catching it yourself during pregnancy can be dangerous to your unborn baby causing deafness and blindness. You should be careful about being around people with **chicken pox** as this also carries a risk. If you are at all in doubt contact your GP or midwife who will advise you of the precautions you should take.

**Sickle Cell Anaemia and Thalassaemia** are inherited blood diseases. Sickle Cell is more common in people from African decent and Thalassaemia in people of Mediterranean and Asian origin. However, it is recommended that all women be tested. We recommend having the screening blood test as soon as your pregnancy is confirmed, if you are at risk. Otherwise, it will be

done by the midwife at your antenatal booking appointment – see below.

Counselling services are available for women with sickle cell trait, sickle cell disease or thalassaemia. For more information call [The Sickle Cell Society](#) on 020 8961 7795 or [The Thalassaemia Society](#) on 020 8882 0011.

## **ANTENATAL CARE BOOKING APPOINTMENT**

The booking visit is ideally done before you are 12 weeks pregnant, either at a local clinic or at the hospital. A midwife will take details of your medical history and a history of any previous pregnancies. It is usually the longest visit and will probably last about 1 hour. You should use the time to discuss any concerns you may have. For this and all following visits your partner, close friend, relative or birth partner is welcome to accompany you.

It is important at this visit to give accurate information about your medical history as this could affect your care and your baby's health. All information will be kept confidential. This means that the information you give will only be available to the people with you at the time and those caring for you during your pregnancy. After this visit you will be given your pregnancy record (notes) which you will look after. You will need to bring them with you every time you have an antenatal appointment or scan or see your GP or midwife whilst you are pregnant.

Before your 'booking in' appointment you may find it helpful to –

- Read the information sent to you by the hospital. This will help you to ask about anything you do not understand.
- Ask your own and your partner's family about any family illnesses or health problems that might affect your baby.



- Write down the first day of your last period.
- Write down the dates of any previous pregnancies.
- Take with you a list of questions you would like to ask. For example, 'When and where are antenatal classes offered? Can I have my baby at home? How often will I have appointments? Are there any special exercise classes available?'

Your booking appointment will usually be your first visit to see your midwife. You will be asked for your permission to take blood samples. The tests should be explained to you. If you have any queries please ask your midwife. The recommended blood tests include a full blood count, blood group and Rhesus factor, rubella (German measles), HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), haemoglobinopathies (inherited blood disorders), hepatitis B and syphilis. There is a leaflet explaining these tests in more detail in this pack. You have the right to refuse any tests you feel are not appropriate for you.

## **SEEING AN OBSTETRICIAN**

If you have any medical problems or problems with your pregnancy an appointment will be made for you to be seen by an obstetrician (a doctor who specialises in pregnancy problems).

## **ONGOING ANTENATAL CARE**

During pregnancy you will be looked after by midwives or your GP or a combination of the two. Discuss the options for your care with your GP when you have your pregnancy confirmed. Have a list of questions to ask for example:

Where can I have my baby?

Who will look after me?  
Can I have all my care at home?’

## **SCANS AND TESTS**

The ***Combined Test*** (a scan and blood test taken at the same time) needs to be done between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy. It uses ultrasound to measure the depth of fluid at the back of the baby’s neck, and looks for levels of specific hormones in your blood. This gives an indication as to whether the baby is at risk of having Down’s syndrome. You will be booked for this test automatically at the point of referral, unless you opt out. More information about this test is in the leaflet in this pack.

Antenatal ***HIV*** testing is recommended to all pregnant women because of the risks of passing the virus to the baby during the pregnancy or by breastfeeding. It also means that the mother can get treatment to keep her well. The test is confidential and doesn’t have to be included in your maternity records. Guy’s and St Thomas’ has a special midwife/HIV counsellor who can be contacted through the midwifery department on 020 7188 6876. For advice you can contact the [Terence Higgins Trust Helpline](#) on 0808 802 1221 or the [National Sexual Health Helpline](#) on 0300 123 7123.

## **YOUR RIGHTS**

Whilst you are pregnant you are entitled to certain benefits and rights. Dental care, prescriptions and chiropody are all free during pregnancy and up to one year after your baby’s birth. Your GP or midwife can provide you with a certificate called a [Maternity Exemption certificate](#) which will enable you to claim your free prescriptions etc. If you have to pay for any prescriptions before you receive your exemption certificate ask the chemist for a receipt

and then fill in form FP57 available from your local post office to claim the money back.

You may also get certain benefits. You can go to [lambeth.gov.uk](http://lambeth.gov.uk) for agencies offering benefits advice.

If you are on Income Support or Family Credit you can get a refund of fares to and from the hospital by filling in form HC5 available from the hospital or your local DSS. You may also be entitled to free milk and vitamins. You should look at [lambeth.gov.uk](http://lambeth.gov.uk) for information on how to go about claiming them.

You also have certain work rights whilst you are pregnant including maternity leave, maternity pay, dismissal and unfair treatment protection, health and safety rights and time off for antenatal care. You will need to get your maternity certificate MatB1 from your midwife or GP. They can issue it after you are 20 weeks pregnant. This will enable you to claim benefits and statutory maternity pay etc. For further advice try the [Maternity Rights Advice](http://Maternity Rights Advice) line on 0808 802 0057.