

Portland Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center Maternity Benefits Information

VA provides maternity benefits for women veterans who have been pre-authorized for care. Eligibility and authorization must be determined prior to prenatal treatment at VA expense. A veteran must be enrolled at the Portland VA in order to be authorized for maternity care at VA expense.

Maternity care will be provided by a non-VA facility (selected by the veteran) within a reasonable distance from the woman's home. Prescriptions will be processed through the VA Pharmacy.

Urgent care needs related to pregnancy will be coordinated through the veteran's pre-authorized maternity provider. For questions or concerns about your pregnancy, contact your maternity provider and keep the phone number with you at all times.

***Coverage for the new born is not authorized at VA Expense!**

***For questions about VA maternity coverage and billing:**

Contact Sandra Burr at (503) 220-8262 extension 31365; (360) 750-5364 or toll free 1-800-949-1004 ext 31365.

***For questions about non-VA health care resources for you or your newborn:**

Contact Margaret Dunn, VA Women's Health Team Social Worker at (503) 220-8262 ext. 54195; (360) 696-4061 ext. 54195; or toll free 1-800-949-1004 ext 54195.

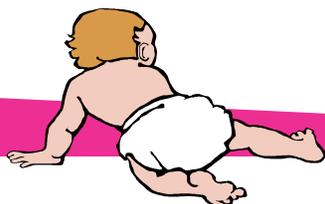
***For information about state-funded health care options for you and your baby:**

Oregon Safe Net 1-800-311-BABY, 1-800-311-2229;
Washington State Health Mothers/Health Babies 1-800-322-2588

***For questions about health care for women veterans or if you're just not sure who to call:**

Contact Carole Most, Women's Veteran Coordinator: (503) 220-8262 ext 55595, (360) 696-4061 ext 55595 or toll free 1-800-949-1004 ext 55595.

*** For any question 24 hours a day, 7 days a week call toll free 1-888-233-8305**



Early Pregnancy

Regular doctor and clinic visits are important. For around 266 days, you and your child will be as one. Your body protects your growing baby and gives it the food and oxygen it needs to grow. The doctor or clinic can help you take good care of yourself and your baby through frequent checkups.

Childbirth classes: About two months before your baby is born, you should attend childbirth classes. You will learn about: labor and delivery; sex during and after pregnancy; breastfeeding; baby care and much more.

Things to avoid during pregnancy:

Alcohol: This includes beer, wine, and hard liquor. Alcohol is a drug that has been shown to cause birth defects such as fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). The sooner a pregnant woman stops drinking, the better are the chances that her baby will be born healthy. FAS is totally preventable.

Drugs: Immediately tell your doctor about any drugs you are taking, including any pills ordered by your doctor or bought in a drugstore. This includes home remedies, aspirin, vitamin pills, and street drugs, such as cocaine, marijuana, crack, angel dust, and heroin. Caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol are also drugs. Talk to your doctor if you use any of these. Your doctor needs this information in order to help you have a healthy pregnancy and baby.

Smoking: Do not smoke while you are pregnant. Smoking can cause a baby to be too small. A tiny baby is not as healthy as a baby of average size.

X-rays: Have an X-ray only if it is ordered by a doctor. Make sure that your stomach is covered.

Avoid changing cat litter. If you have a cat, have someone else change the litter box or have the cat go outside. There may be germs in the cat litter that can injure your baby while you are pregnant.

Do not eat raw fish or meat.

Remember: Anything you put into your body goes to your baby. Be safe; do all you can to make sure that your baby is healthy.



Food to eat while you are pregnant:

Each day you need the following:

Three servings (four, if you are a teenager) chosen from meat, fish, eggs, poultry, dried beans, dried peas, lentils, or peanut butter.

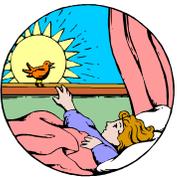
Four servings (five, if you are a teenager) of milk or milk products, such as yogurt, cheese, or ice cream. Some people eat bone soup, mustard greens, and collard greens to add calcium to their diets.

Four servings of fruit and vegetables or fruit and vegetable juices (not juice drinks).

Four servings of grain products, such as cereal, bread, crackers, rice, cornmeal, macaroni, noodles, spaghetti, grits, or tortillas.



Remember: Take the vitamins your doctor gives you every day. Vitamins do not replace food! You need all the above foods every day to build a healthy baby.



Common Problems of Early Pregnancy

Tiredness: Get enough sleep at night. Rest whenever you can during the day. Make sure you are eating well; not enough food can make you tired. The tiredness usually ends in about three months.

Nausea or morning sickness: This is most likely to occur if your stomach is empty. Eat small meals, possibly six, instead of three large meals daily. Some people like to eat three meals, plus a mid-morning snack. Don't let your stomach get empty. Don't eat greasy, fatty, or spicy food. Drink small sips of liquid before or an hour after meals, not with meals. If you do get nausea, lie down with your head on pillows and open a window to get fresh air. Be sure to let the clinic or doctor know if your nausea or vomiting doesn't go away or seems to get worse. Remember, your baby is very tiny and you need to eat so that your baby can grow.

Constipation: Eat high-fiber foods, including fresh fruits and vegetables; whole-grain breads; high-fiber cereals; and beans, such as kidney or pinto beans. Drink plenty of liquids. Try to increase your activity, such as walking. Don't use laxatives.

Having to urinate a lot: Drink a lot during the day so that you can decrease your liquids after dinner. Don't try to hold it in. Urinate whenever you need to. This problem should stop at around three months of pregnancy. Tell your doctor or clinic if you have any pain or bleeding when you urinate.



Danger signs: Report any of the following to the doctor or clinic, or go immediately to the hospital where your baby will be born:

Blood or water from the vagina

Sudden swelling of the face, hands, or ankles

Fever over 100 degrees F

Unusual problems with your eyes

Pain in the stomach area

If you have any of these dangers signs:

Call your doctor or clinic at: _____

or your hospital at: _____.

Remember: Pregnancy is an exciting time of change. The staff here want to help you



Discomforts of Pregnancy

The discomforts of pregnancy happen because of changes your body is making. Many of these changes are scary and uncomfortable. It helps to learn what these changes are, why they are happening, and what you can do to help relieve them.

Also, don't hesitate to call your doctor or nurse for advice. And remember, always check with your doctor before taking any medications.

Nausea or morning sickness: Nausea is the most common complaint of the first three months of pregnancy. It is caused by hormonal changes. Early morning is usually the worst time because of the buildup of stomach acids and a low blood sugar.

Helpful suggestions include:

Never let your stomach get empty. Eat five or six smaller meals instead of three large ones. Try a light snack before going to bed (milk or cheese with fruit or juice).

Keep crackers or dry toast at your bedside. Before you even raise your head in the morning, nibble some and then lie back for 15–20 minutes before you get up.

At breakfast, go easy on foods containing fats. Eat fruit or drink juice (which is acidic only at the end of the meal).

Avoid greasy, spicy foods.

Drink very hot or very cold liquids. Experiment to see if one works for you.



Dizziness or Faintness : Dizziness can be caused by the growing uterus pressing on major blood vessels, which causes a blood pressure drop, and also by changes in your hormones. When rising from bed or a chair, rise slowly and sit at the edge for a few minutes before standing. Also, try some deep breathing. Avoid low blood sugar by eating five or six small meals a day.

Acid indigestion or heartburn: Heartburn is a burning felt in your chest, but it has nothing to do with the heart. Food does not move out of your stomach as fast as it did before you became pregnant. Stomach acid can back up into your esophagus (the passageway to your stomach). You may even taste a little sour fluid in your mouth.

To help relieve heartburn:

Avoid greasy and spicy foods

Avoid large meals, especially right before going to bed

Avoid alcohol

Sip milk

If the burning becomes too bad, you may want to ask your doctor to prescribe an antacid.

Do not take Alka Seltzer™ or baking soda.



Constipation : Constipation happens because your stomach and other digestive organs are slowing down. Drink at least six to eight glasses of water every day. Eat foods high in fiber, such as bran cereals, fresh fruits and vegetables. Walking or other exercise may help, as well as trying to have a bowel movement at the same time every day. Do not take stool softeners or laxatives or use enemas without your doctor's approval.



Frequent urination : During the first three to four months of pregnancy, the amount of urine increases because of hormonal changes in your body. As the pregnancy progresses, the growing uterus presses on the bladder, thereby increasing the frequency of urination. Do not restrict fluid intake to lessen the problem - this can be harmful to you and the baby. You may want to decrease the amount of liquids you drink in the evening, however, to limit nighttime trips to the bathroom.

Swelling or edema : The rise in female hormones during pregnancy causes a normal fluid retention. Every pregnant woman has some swelling, especially in the hands and feet. Anything more than mild swelling, however, can be a sign of complications and should be reported to your doctor immediately. Diuretics (water pills) and eliminating salt from the diet are not the answer. Ask your nurse or doctor to advise you about a high-protein / low carbohydrate diet. Mild, frequent exercise, such as swimming and walking, also helps. Avoid tight clothing, and remove rings if your fingers get puffy. Avoid standing in one position for too long, and elevate your legs whenever possible.



Varicose veins : Varicose veins have two combined causes;
The increased fluid in your system
The pressure on the veins in your legs from the growing uterus.
Varicose veins are hereditary and will decrease after the baby's birth. Do not wear stockings with elastic bands on the legs because they cut off circulation. You may find that wearing support hose is helpful. Elevate your legs when you are sitting and put a pillow under your feet when you are lying down. Also, try not to stand in one place too long.

Leg cramps : Muscle cramps are due to the slowing of your blood circulation. Shooting pains down your legs can be the result of pressure of the baby's head on certain nerves. Make sure you are getting enough calcium (milk products) and potassium (bananas, grapefruits, oranges) in your diet. Keeping your legs elevated and avoiding the pointing of your toes when stretching can help prevent leg cramps. A heating pad, hot water bottle, or massage of the muscle can also help.



Backache and pelvic pressure : Backaches are the result of the increased weight you are carrying, as well as the changes in your body shape to make room for the growing baby. Don't stand in one place or position too long. Good posture also helps. To bend down, bend at the knees, not at the waist. A footstool or box under your feet while you're sitting can relieve backache; as well as heating pads on the sore area, back rubs, and plenty of rest. Sleep on a firm mattress, and put a small pillow under your side at waist level to keep your shoulders and hips even while you're asleep. Also, ask your nurse or doctor about exercises you can do to help relieve backaches (e.g. pelvic rock).



Hemorrhoids : Hemorrhoids are caused by the increased pressure on the veins in your anus (similar to varicose veins in your legs). Avoid constipation because straining and pushing make them worse. Sit only on hard surfaces if you have hemorrhoids; sinking into a soft chair cuts off circulation in your lower intestine. Sitting "tailor fashion" on the floor will also help - let your belly fall forward to take the weight off your pelvis and back.



A warm bath often helps to relieve the pain and swelling of hemorrhoids. Also, cold compresses with witch hazel can be comforting. Your doctor may prescribe a cream or suppository for you to use as well. Also, ask your doctor or nurse to explain kegal exercises to you. These exercises stimulate circulation and help to heal hemorrhoids.



Vaginal changes : The most noticeable vaginal change is an increase in discharge and often an accompanying increase in vaginal odor. Douching will give only temporary relief and is not recommended. You should not douche if your bag of water has ruptured, or if you have had vaginal bleeding at any time during the pregnancy. You may also notice an uncomfortable swelling in the vaginal area; this is due to increased blood supply. A cold compress on the area can help.

Changes in your breasts : Breasts swell during pregnancy because the milk glands are beginning to develop. They may also tingle, throb, or hurt. The veins are usually easier to see because of the increased blood supply to the breasts. The areola (the dark area around the nipples) may become larger and darken as a result of hormonal changes. It is important to wear a bra that gives you good support throughout your pregnancy. You may also notice a yellowish, watery fluid leaking from your nipples after the first few months of pregnancy. This is called colostrum. As your due date nears, it will start looking more whitish, resembling milk.

Fatigue and sleep disturbances : Fatigue is most pronounced in early pregnancy when your sleep requirements normally increase by several hours. It is important to take naps (even for 5–10 minutes) and to go to bed earlier. Sleeplessness can occur during any part of your pregnancy, although it is often worse in the last weeks. Do not sleep on your back - this puts all your weight on your internal organs and blood vessels. Sleep on your side with one leg crossed over and a pillow either between your legs or under the crossed-over leg to improve circulation. A hot bath, or a cup of hot cocoa before bed might help you to relax.



First Trimester—Do's and Don'ts

DO eat healthy, nutritious, well-balanced foods.

DO avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and caffeine.

DO chew your food thoroughly before swallowing. Your digestive tract is less active when you are pregnant.

DO continue to exercise or start an easy exercise program if it's okay with your doctor or midwife—but do not lift anything that could strain your abdominal muscles.

DO plan to visit your dentist once during pregnancy. Tell your dentist you're pregnant so that precautions can be taken if X-rays are necessary.

DO try to get at least eight hours of sleep every night.

DO continue to use your car's safety belt. Place the belt low, around your pelvis, not your abdomen.

DO consult your doctor before you take any medications. Many drugs cross the placenta and can hurt your baby.

DON'T smoke during pregnancy. If you feel that's impossible, get help or cut down to a bare minimum. It has been proven that smoking contributes to miscarriages and retarded fetal growth.

DON'T clean your cat's litter box. Cat feces carries **toxoplasmosis**, a potentially fatal fetal disease. Raw meat also carries the disease, so don't feed it to your cat and don't eat raw meat.

DON'T use alcohol or drugs of any sort, even nonprescription ones, unless your doctor says otherwise. This includes aspirin, laxatives, nose drops, cold remedies, antacids, sleeping pills, and linament.

DON'T begin a reducing diet now unless your doctor has planned it for you.

DON'T panic should you find you're spotting - just call your doctor right away. A small amount of spotting is common for many women in the first trimester.

DON'T use herbal supplements without your doctors authorization and or approval.



Daily Food Guide During Pregnancy

Diet and Nutrition

Food Groups

How Much Each Day

(Servings and Sources)

Milk and Milk Products

You need four 8-ounce glasses of milk or milk products daily to give you and your baby the calcium and other nutrients needed for strong bones and teeth. Choose milks that have vitamin D added. You may select whole milk, butter milk, low-fat milk, or dry or fluid skim milk. Low-fat and skim milks have fewer calories than whole milk. Milk or cheese used in making soup, pudding, sauces, and other foods count toward the total amount of milk you use.



Four 8 ounces glasses of milk or milk products each day

These amounts equal the calcium in one 8-ounce glass of milk:

- 1 cup liquid skim milk, low-fat milk, or buttermilk
- 1/2 cup evaporated milk (undiluted)
- 2 one-inch cubes or 2 slices of cheese
- 1/3 cup instant powdered milk
- 1 cup plain yogurt, custard, or milk pudding

These amounts equal the calcium in 1/3 cup of milk:

- 2/3 cup cottage cheese
- 1/2 cup ice cream

Whole-Grain or Enriched Breads and Cereals

Breads and cereal foods provide minerals and vitamins, particularly the B vitamins and iron, as well as protein. Whole-grain breads and cereals provide essential trace elements, such as zinc, and also fiber, a natural laxative. Check the labels on breads and cereals to be sure that they are made with whole-wheat or whole-grain flour or are enriched with minerals and vitamins.



Four or five servings of whole-grain or enriched breads, cereals, and cereal products each day:

These amounts equal one serving:

- 1 slice of bread
- 1 muffin
- 1 roll or biscuit
- 1 tortilla or taco shell
- 1/2 to 3/4 cup noodles, spaghetti, rice, bulgur, macaroni
- 2 small pancakes
- 1 section waffle
- 2 graham crackers or 4-6 small crackers

These amounts count as two servings:

- 1 hamburger bun or hotdog roll

Food Groups

How Much Each Day (Servings and Sources)

Fats and Sweets

This group of other foods includes margarine, butter, candy, jellies, sugars, syrups, desserts, soft drinks, snack foods, salad dressings, vegetable oils, and other fats used in cooking. Most of these foods are high in fat, sugar, or salt. Use them to meet additional caloric needs after basic nutritional needs have been met. Eating too much fat and too many sweets may crowd out other necessary nutrients.

No specific number of types of servings are recommended for fats and sweets.



Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins, minerals, and fiber, a natural laxative. The dark-green leafy vegetables and deep yellow low vegetables and fruits are rich in vitamin A. The dark-green leafy vegetables are also valuable for iron, vitamin C, magnesium, folacin, and riboflavin.

At least one serving of a good source of vitamin A every other day:

Apricots	Dark-green leafy
Broccoli	vegetables : beet
Cantaloupe	greens, chard,
Carrots	collards, kale,
Sweet potatoes	mustard greens,
Winter squash	spinach, turnip
	greens
	Pumpkin

At least one serving of a good source of vitamin C

Broccoli	Dark-green leafy
Brussels sprouts	vegetables - chard,
Cabbage	collards, kale, mus-
Cantaloupe	tard greens, spin-
Cauliflower	ach, turnip greens
Orange or orange juice	Grapefruit or grapefruit
Strawberries	juice
Tomatoes	Green or sweet red
Watermelon	pepper



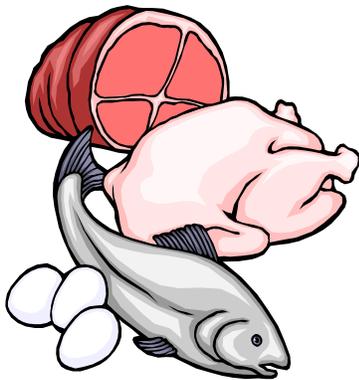
Food Groups

Fruits and Vegetables continued:



Meat, Fish, Poultry, Eggs, Dried Beans and Peas, Nuts

Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dried beans and peas, seeds, nuts, and peanuts butter supply protein, as well as vitamins and minerals. Protein is needed to help build new tissues for you and your baby.



How Much Each Day (Servings and Sources)

Two servings of other vegetables and fruits each day:

Apples	Green or wax beans
Bananas	Lettuce
Beetes	Pears
Cherries	Peas
Corn	Pineapple
Eggplant	Plums
Grapes	Potatoes
	Squash

Three servings of protein food every day, these amounts equal one serving:

2 or 3 ounces of lean meat (remove extra fat when possible). Some examples: 1 hamburger, 2 thin slices of beef, pork, lamb or veal; 1 lean pork chop; 2 slices of luncheon meat; 2 hot dogs.

2 or 3 ounces of fish. Some examples: 1 whole small fish, 1 small fish fillet, 1/3 of a 6 1/2 ounce can of tuna fish or salmon.

2 or 3 ounces of chicken, turkey, or other poultry. Some examples: 2 slices light or dark meat (turkey), 1 chicken leg, 1/2 chicken breast.

These amounts equal 1/2 serving:

1/2 to 3/4 cup cooked dried beans, peas, lentils, or garbanzos (chick peas)

2 to 3 tablespoons peanut butter

1 or 2 slices cheese

1 egg

1 cup of tofu

4 to 6 tablespoons nuts or seeds

Movement and Exercise During Pregnancy

The exercises and information presented here are designed to serve two important functions: (1) to make your pregnancy more comfortable, and (2) to prepare your body for labor and delivery.

Before you begin or continue any strenuous exercise program, see your doctor and explain what you plan to do. Most doctors feel it's fine to continue exercise as long as you don't get overtired.

Begin these exercises by doing one or two the first day. Then build up gradually until you can do three to five of each exercise every day.

Do not push yourself to the point of exhaustion and never continue any

Rising from lying down

Technique:

Draw up knees, and turning shoulders and hips at the same time, roll to the right or left side.

Move knees and feet to edge of bed.

Rise slowly, using arms to push yourself up.

Swing legs over side of bed.

Pause for a moment before standing up.



Sitting down and getting up

To sit:

Back into the chair. Feel the seat with your hand or back of the leg before lowering your weight.

Place one leg behind and slightly beneath the chair for a good base of support.

Use your leg muscles to lower yourself into the seat. Keep our back straight.

To rise:

Slide forward and lift yourself from the chair using your leg muscles.

Use your arms for support as you shift your weight to your feet. Keep your back straight.

Squatting, reaching and lifting

Technique:

Squat down slowly with knees wide apart and heels flat on the floor. Keep the weight on the outside edges of your feet and point your toes straight ahead. Hold onto a doorknob or other firm object as you lower yourself. Stay down one minute or longer.

Rise to a standing position using thigh muscles to lift yourself.

Avoid lifting whenever possible. Do not bend from the waist. Instead of lifting a toddler, let the child stand on a stool while you assist. You may also sit down so the

Lifting moderately heavy object

Technique:

Place one foot forward

Lower yourself until your other knee is on the floor.

Use your front foot, flat on the floor, for lifting. Use the rear foot, flexed at the toes, for pushing and to act as a balance.

Bring the object close to you. Rise to standing, using your leg muscles to back strain

Tailor sit

Purpose:

To increase stretch of ligaments for delivery.

To rest back.

Technique:

Sit cross-legged with knees as near the floor as possible.

Keep back straight, with body bent slightly forward.

Do not cross your ankles - this may slow circulation.

Frequency:

Start with two to five minutes per day; work up to one-half hour per day.



Calf stretching

Purpose:

To reduce leg cramps.

Technique:

Place hands on back of a chair or something else you can use for support. Slide the foot of the cramped leg as far back as possible leaving your heel on the floor. Bend the knee of your other leg, then rise and relax. Repeat several times.

Lie down and straighten your cramped leg.

Have someone push down against your knee with one hand. With the other hand against the sole of the foot, have the person push the foot until it's at a sharp angle with

Pelvic rock

Purpose:

To develop full pelvic mobility.

To relieve backache.

To improve posture.

Technique:

Kneel on all fours with your arms and thighs at right angles to your body. Distribute your weight evenly.

Tilt front pelvis up; tighten abdomen and buttocks muscles.

Relax the abdomen and buttocks, allowing the pelvis to drop gently. Alternate the movements slowly with smooth control.

Coordinate breathing with the rocking movements. As your head comes up, take a deep breath through your nose. Relax the pelvis. As your head goes down, exhale through the mouth. Contract the abdominal muscles.

Frequency:

Do at least 20 rocks prior to bedtime. Work up to 20 rocks three times a day.

Pelvic rock–back lying

Technique:

Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat on the floor.

Flatten your back against the floor and pull in lower abdominal muscles just above the pubic bone. Tighten the buttocks at the same time.

Relax and arch your back so you can get both fists under your back.

Flatten your back against the floor again.

Put hands on your hipbones to feel the moving up and down.



Kegel exercise

Purpose:

To improve general muscle tone and maintain muscle firmness in later life.

To help muscles stretch more easily during delivery.

To develop conscious control of these muscles in order to relax them during the expulsive stage of labor

To increase sexual enjoyment by improving the tone and strength of the pelvic diaphragm muscles.

To help prevent bladder infections and urine leakage.

Technique:

Sit on a low stool or chair with your knees apart. Lean forward and rest elbows on knees. Tighten the muscles around the vagina and urethra. Relax, repeat, adding anus muscles. Release in the opposite direction. The wave–like tempo will build elasticity.

Think of the pelvic floor as an elevator. Contract muscles in stages, rising to successive levels slowly. The sub–basement of the elevator is for total release and will be used in the expulsion stage of labor. Always tighten to the second level before lifting, coughing, sneezing, standing, and walking.

Frequency:

Do as often as possible during the day.

May be done while driving, watching TV, etc.

Continue to do this exercise for the rest of your life.