Folic Acid and the Prevention of Neural Tube Defects

What is folate?
Folate is one of the B vitamins and is found naturally in citrus fruits, raw leafy green vegetables, beans, peas, lentils and liver. The levels vary considerably and are susceptible to excessive heat such as prolonged cooking. Naturally occurring folate is not as easily absorbed in the body as is folic acid.

What is folic acid?
Folic acid, the synthetic form of folate, can be found in vitamin pills, fortified breakfast cereals and enriched grain products. In the tablet form, folic acid is available in the vitamin section of pharmacies and grocery stores.

Folic acid and/or folate are essential for the normal development of a baby’s brain, spine and skull. The effects of folic acid are most significant during the first few weeks of pregnancy.

Can a woman get enough folate from diet alone?
It is important that everyone, especially women of reproductive age, eat a healthy diet as recommended in Canada’s Food Guide. Since 1998 in Canada, white flour, enriched pasta and cornmeal have been mandated to be fortified with folic acid. However, at the present levels of fortification, it would be difficult for most women to consume the currently recommended level of folic acid from diet alone. Health Canada recommends that in addition to eating a well-balanced diet that includes foods high in folate, women of reproductive age should take a daily multivitamin supplement containing folic acid.

What are Neural Tube Defects (NTDs)?
Neural tube defects (NTDs) are congenital malformations of the neural tube, the embryonic structure that develops into the brain and spinal cord. Every unborn baby’s spine is open when it first forms, and normally closes by the 29th day following conception; often before pregnancy is confirmed. In the case of a neural tube defect, the backbone and spinal cord never completely close.

The most common NTDs are anencephaly and spina bifida. Anencephaly is a fatal condition in which a baby is born with a severely underdeveloped brain and skull. Spina bifida involves a malformation of the vertebrae and possible damage to the nervous system. The spinal cord and its coverings protrude through openings between the individual bones that make up the backbone, resulting in a bulge or “sac”. This can occur anywhere along the back, from the neck to the buttocks, although the majority of the sacs appear on the lower back. The term spina bifida can apply to a variety of conditions that range from relatively minor problems that can be surgically corrected, to severe physical disabilities and developmental delays.

How does an NTD affect a child?
A child born with spina bifida may have permanent paralysis of the lower limbs and may lack bowel and bladder control. An excessive accumulation of spinal fluid in the brain may occur, leading to enlargement of the head and impairment of brain functions.
How many children are born with NTDs?
In Saskatchewan, approximately one out of every thousand babies born is diagnosed with an NTD; that is 10 to 20 babies are born with this condition every year in this province.

What causes NTDs?
The cause of NTDs is largely unknown. Experts believe that the cause is related to both genetic and environmental factors.

Can NTDs be prevented?
Studies show that women who consume recommended doses of folic acid can reduce the risk of having a child with an NTD by as much as 70%. However, it is important to note that not all NTDs can be prevented by the maternal intake of folic acid.

How much folic acid should be taken to reduce the risk of NTDs?
Women with low health risks should eat a diet rich in folate and begin taking a folic acid fortified multivitamin containing 0.4-1.0mg of folic acid at least 2-3 months before conception. Women should continue taking this multivitamin throughout their entire pregnancy and continue throughout breastfeeding.

Women with compromised health or particular health conditions include women with: diabetes, epilepsy, obesity, a family history of NTDs, a previous pregnancy affected by an NTD, poor compliance with medication and lifestyle related risk factors such as poor diet, substance abuse and incorrect or non-use of birth control.

Women with compromised health or particular health conditions should eat a diet rich in folate and begin taking a daily multivitamin containing 5.0mg of folic acid at least 3 months before becoming pregnant. Women should continue taking this level of supplementation throughout the entire pregnancy and into the 10th - 14th week of breastfeeding. Currently this amount of folic acid is available only with a doctor’s prescription.

Half of all pregnancies are unplanned, and therefore all women of reproductive age are at risk for having a child with a neural tube defect. Health Canada recommends that all women of reproductive age reduce the risk by seeking advice from their health professional on how to take folic acid as part of their routine.

Optimal perinatal intake of folic acid, in the time around pregnancy, is the single most important way to reduce the risk of NTDs. Women who are concerned or at higher risk should contact their health care provider for more information.

Are there tests to detect neural tube defects?
Prenatal diagnostic tests are offered to test for neural tube defects. These tests will identify almost all NTDs and are not harmful to the baby. Discuss which test is most appropriate with a doctor.

Acknowledgements
Thanks to the Perinatal Outreach Program, Regina Qu’Appelle Health Region and the Perinatal Education Program, University of Saskatchewan for their collaboration in updating this fact sheet.

References


**Recommended Number of Food Guide Servings per Day**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in Years</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Teens</th>
<th>Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Girls and Boys</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>Females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-50</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51+</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What is One Food Guide Serving? Look at the examples below.**

### Vegetables and Fruit
- Fresh, frozen or canned vegetables: 125 mL (1/2 cup)
- Fresh, frozen or canned fruits: 1 fruit or 125 mL (1/2 cup)
- Leafy vegetables: Cooked: 125 mL (1/2 cup), Raw: 250 mL (1 cup)
- Cooked rice, bulgur or quinoa: 125 mL (1/2 cup)
- 100% Juice: 125 mL (1/2 cup)

### Grain Products
- Bread: 1 slice (35 g)
- Bagel: 1/2 bagel (45 g)
- Flat breads: 1/2 pita or 1/2 tortilla (35 g)
- Corn flakes: 35 g
- Cornmeal: 35 g
- Couscous: 75 g

### Milk and Alternatives
- Milk or powdered milk (reconstituted): 250 mL (1 cup)
- Canned milk (evaporated): 125 mL (1/2 cup)
- Fortified soy beverage: 250 mL (1 cup)
- Yogurt: 175 g (1/2 cup)
- Kefir: 175 g (1/2 cup)
- Cheese: 50 g (1/2 oz)

### Meat and Alternatives
- Cooked fish, shellfish, poultry, lean meat: 75 g (2 oz/125 mL (1 cup)
- Cooked legumes: 175 mL (1/2 cup)
- Tofu: 100 g (1/2 cup)
- Eggs: 2 eggs
- Peanut or nut butters: 30 mL (2 Tbsp)
- Shelled nuts and seeds: 60 mL (1 cup)

### Oils and Fats
- Include a small amount – 30 to 45 mL (2 to 3 Tbsp) – of unsaturated fat each day. This includes oil used for cooking, salad dressings, margarine and mayonnaise.
- Use vegetable oils such as canola, olive and soybean.
- Choose soft margarines that are low in saturated and trans fats.
- Limit butter, hard margarine, lard and shortening.

### Make Each Food Guide Serving count... wherever you are – at home, at school, at work or when eating out!
- Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.
- Go for dark green vegetables such as broccoli, romaine lettuce and spinach.
- Go for orange vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes and winter squash.
- Choose vegetables and fruit prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt.
- Enjoy vegetables steamed, baked or stir-fried instead of deep-fried.
- Have vegetables and fruit more often than juice.
- Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.
- Eat a variety of whole grains such as barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa and wild rice.
- Enjoy whole grain bread, oatmeal or whole wheat pasta.
- Choose grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt.
- Compare the Nutrition Facts table to make wise choices.
- Enjoy the true taste of grain products. When adding sauces or spreads, use small amounts.
- Drink skim, 1%, or 2% milk products.
- Have 500 mL (2 cups) of milk every day for adequate vitamin D.
- Drink fortified soy beverages if you do not drink milk.
- Select lower fat milk alternatives.
- Compare the Nutrition Facts table on yogurts or cheeses to make wise choices.
- Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.
- Eat at least two Food Guide Servings of fish each week.*
- Choose fish such as haddock, herring, mackerel, salmon, and sardines.
- Select lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt.
- Trim the visible fat from meats. Remove the skin on poultry.
- Use cooking methods such as roasting, baking or poaching that require little or no added fat.
- If you eat luncheon meats, sausages or prepackaged meats, choose those lower in salt (sodium) and fat.
- Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.
- Eat a variety of whole grains such as barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa and wild rice.
- Enjoy whole grain bread, oatmeal or whole wheat pasta.
- Choose grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt.
- Compare the Nutrition Facts table to make wise choices.
- Enjoy the true taste of grain products. When adding sauces or spreads, use small amounts.
- Drink skim, 1%, or 2% milk products.
- Have 500 mL (2 cups) of milk every day for adequate vitamin D.
- Drink fortified soy beverages if you do not drink milk.
- Select lower fat milk alternatives.
- Compare the Nutrition Facts table on yogurts or cheeses to make wise choices.
- Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.
- Eat at least two Food Guide Servings of fish each week.*
- Choose fish such as haddock, herring, mackerel, salmon, and sardines.
- Select lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt.
- Trim the visible fat from meats. Remove the skin on poultry.
- Use cooking methods such as roasting, baking or poaching that require little or no added fat.
- If you eat luncheon meats, sausages or prepackaged meats, choose those lower in salt (sodium) and fat.
- Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.
- Eat a variety of whole grains such as barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa and wild rice.
- Enjoy whole grain bread, oatmeal or whole wheat pasta.
- Choose grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt.
- Compare the Nutrition Facts table to make wise choices.
- Enjoy the true taste of grain products. When adding sauces or spreads, use small amounts.
- Drink skim, 1%, or 2% milk products.
- Have 500 mL (2 cups) of milk every day for adequate vitamin D.
- Drink fortified soy beverages if you do not drink milk.
- Select lower fat milk alternatives.
- Compare the Nutrition Facts table on yogurts or cheeses to make wise choices.
- Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.
- Eat at least two Food Guide Servings of fish each week.*
- Choose fish such as haddock, herring, mackerel, salmon, and sardines.
- Select lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt.
- Trim the visible fat from meats. Remove the skin on poultry.
- Use cooking methods such as roasting, baking or poaching that require little or no added fat.
- If you eat luncheon meats, sausages or prepackaged meats, choose those lower in salt (sodium) and fat.

### Make Each Food Guide Serving count... wherever you are – at home, at school, at work or when eating out!
- Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day.
- Go for dark green vegetables such as broccoli, romaine lettuce and spinach.
- Go for orange vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes and winter squash.
- Choose vegetables and fruit prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt.
- Enjoy vegetables steamed, baked or stir-fried instead of deep-fried.
- Have vegetables and fruit more often than juice.
- Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.
- Eat a variety of whole grains such as barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa and wild rice.
- Enjoy whole grain bread, oatmeal or whole wheat pasta.
- Choose grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt.
- Compare the Nutrition Facts table to make wise choices.
- Enjoy the true taste of grain products. When adding sauces or spreads, use small amounts.
- Drink skim, 1%, or 2% milk products.
- Have 500 mL (2 cups) of milk every day for adequate vitamin D.
- Drink fortified soy beverages if you do not drink milk.
- Select lower fat milk alternatives.
- Compare the Nutrition Facts table on yogurts or cheeses to make wise choices.
- Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.
- Eat at least two Food Guide Servings of fish each week.*
- Choose fish such as haddock, herring, mackerel, salmon, and sardines.
- Select lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt.
- Trim the visible fat from meats. Remove the skin on poultry.
- Use cooking methods such as roasting, baking or poaching that require little or no added fat.
- If you eat luncheon meats, sausages or prepackaged meats, choose those lower in salt (sodium) and fat.
- Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.
- Eat a variety of whole grains such as barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa and wild rice.
- Enjoy whole grain bread, oatmeal or whole wheat pasta.
- Choose grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt.
- Compare the Nutrition Facts table to make wise choices.
- Enjoy the true taste of grain products. When adding sauces or spreads, use small amounts.
- Drink skim, 1%, or 2% milk products.
- Have 500 mL (2 cups) of milk every day for adequate vitamin D.
- Drink fortified soy beverages if you do not drink milk.
- Select lower fat milk alternatives.
- Compare the Nutrition Facts table on yogurts or cheeses to make wise choices.
- Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.
- Eat at least two Food Guide Servings of fish each week.*
- Choose fish such as haddock, herring, mackerel, salmon, and sardines.
- Select lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt.
- Trim the visible fat from meats. Remove the skin on poultry.
- Use cooking methods such as roasting, baking or poaching that require little or no added fat.
- If you eat luncheon meats, sausages or prepackaged meats, choose those lower in salt (sodium) and fat.

* Health Canada provides advice for limiting exposure to mercury from certain types of fish. Refer to www.healthcanada.gc.ca for the latest information.
Eat well and be active today and every day!

The benefits of eating well and being active include:
- Better overall health.
- Lower risk of disease.
- A healthy body weight.
- Feeling and looking better.
- More energy.
- Stronger muscles and bones.

Be active
To be active every day is a step towards better health and a healthy body weight.
It is recommended that adults accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week and that children and youth accumulate at least 60 minutes per day. You don’t have to do it all at once. Choose a variety of activities spread throughout the week.
Start slowly and build up.

Eat well
Another important step towards better health is a healthy body weight. It is recommended that adults accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week and that children and youth accumulate at least 60 minutes per day. You don’t have to do it all at once. Choose a variety of activities spread throughout the week.

How do I count Food Guide Servings in a meal?
Here is an example:

Vegetable and beef stir-fry with rice, a glass of milk and an apple for dessert

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Food Guide Serving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>250 mL (1 cup) brown rice</td>
<td>1 Vegetables and Fruit Food Guide Serving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 g (3 oz) lean beef</td>
<td>1.5 Meat and Alternatives Food Guide Servings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 apple</td>
<td>1.5 Vegetables and Fruit Food Guide Serving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250 mL (1 cup) 1% milk</td>
<td>1 Milk and Alternatives Food Guide Serving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Limit trans fat
When a Nutrition Facts table is not available, ask for nutrition information before eating fast foods in trains and restaurants.

Nutrition Facts
Nutrient Amount % Daily Value
Calories 270 3%
Total Fat 9 g 15%
Saturated Fat 2 g 10%
Trans Fat 0 g 0%
Cholesterol 0 mg 0%
Sodium 60 mg 3%
Total Carbohydrate 29 g 10%
Dietary Fiber 1 g 4%
Sugar 0 g 0%
Protein 9 g 17%
Calcium 58 mg 6%
Iron 1 mg 6%
Sodium 1 mg 0%
Vitamin A 95 µg 6%
Vitamin C 0 mg 0%
For more information, interactive tools, or additional copies visit Canada’s Food Guide on-line at: www.eatrightcanada.ca/foodguide

Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide
Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide helps everyone over the age of 50 should take a daily vitamin D supplement of 10 µg (400 IU).

Keep in mind that the calories and nutrients listed are for the amount of food found at the top of the Nutrition Facts Table.

For information, interactive tools, or additional copies visit Canada’s Food Guide on-line at: www.eatrightcanada.ca/foodguide

Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide
Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide helps everyone over the age of 50 should take a daily vitamin D supplement of 10 µg (400 IU).
A HEALTHY BABY IS WORTH THE WEIGHT

• Talk to your health care provider about the weight gain range that is best for you.
• Weight gain is an important part of pregnancy.
• Eating well and staying active can help you to gain the recommended amount of weight for this pregnancy.
• Enjoy this special time in your life; you are building a new baby!

EVERY BODY IS DIFFERENT

Eat well
Be active
Reduce stress
Avoid smoking, drugs and alcohol

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
• Your health care provider
• Your local public health office

MORE RESOURCES:
• The Exercise & Pregnancy Help Line 1-866-937-7678
• Health Canada, The Healthy Pregnancy
  www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/hp-gs/index_e.html

1319 Colony Street
Saskatoon, SK S7N 2Z1
Bus. (306) 655-2512
Fax. (306) 655-2511
Email: info@preventioninstitute.sk.ca
Website: www.preventioninstitute.sk.ca
Congratulations, you are having a baby!
Pregnancy is a special time... take good care of yourself.

How much weight gain is right for you?

• Weight gain is an important part of pregnancy. Eating well and gaining weight during pregnancy is not only good for you, but also good for your baby.
• The recommended amount of weight gain for a healthy baby depends on your weight before pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider about the weight gain range that is best for you.
• Knowing the weight gain range is right for you will help you to gain enough weight without gaining too much weight.

What will impact my weight gain?

• EAT WELL
Your baby shares the food you eat and both of you need to eat well. It is important to eat nutritious foods and to take a prenatal vitamin every day for the baby to grow. You are eating for two but not like two. During your second and third trimester of pregnancy, most women need to add an extra 2 to 3 food servings from the food guide each day. Add healthy snacks to your day like a piece of fruit and yogurt or an extra piece of whole grain toast and an extra glass of milk.

• BE ACTIVE
Daily, moderate activity during your pregnancy is important. Walking and swimming are fun and safe ways to stay active in pregnancy.

• REDUCE STRESS
Some stress is normal, but too much can stop you from taking care of yourself. Here are a few ideas that may help:
• Try to get enough sleep at night, and rest when you need it.
• Talk to someone you trust or with your caregiver about your stress.
• Prenatal classes can be a fun way to share with others.

• AVOID SMOKING, DRUGS AND ALCOHOL
Smoking, drugs and alcohol can all harm the baby and limit baby’s growth. No amount is safe in pregnancy.

• Women who do not gain enough weight during pregnancy are more likely to deliver a low birth weight baby. Low birth weight babies are more likely to have health problems.
• Women who gain more weight than recommended may have health problems in pregnancy.
• Now is not the time to diet or lose weight. Talk to your caregiver if you have ever struggled with an eating disorder.
• Just like your baby, every pregnancy is unique and so is your body. Talk to your caregiver if you need support about your changing body.

Congratulations, you are having a baby! Pregnancy is a special time... take good care of yourself.

How much weight gain is right for you?

• Weight gain is an important part of pregnancy. Eating well and gaining weight during pregnancy is not only good for you, but also good for your baby.
• The recommended amount of weight gain for a healthy baby depends on your weight before pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider about the weight gain range that is best for you.
• Knowing the weight gain range is right for you will help you to gain enough weight without gaining too much weight.

What will impact my weight gain?

• EAT WELL
Your baby shares the food you eat and both of you need to eat well. It is important to eat nutritious foods and to take a prenatal vitamin every day for the baby to grow. You are eating for two but not like two. During your second and third trimester of pregnancy, most women need to add an extra 2 to 3 food servings from the food guide each day. Add healthy snacks to your day like a piece of fruit and yogurt or an extra piece of whole grain toast and an extra glass of milk.

• BE ACTIVE
Daily, moderate activity during your pregnancy is important. Walking and swimming are fun and safe ways to stay active in pregnancy.

• REDUCE STRESS
Some stress is normal, but too much can stop you from taking care of yourself. Here are a few ideas that may help:
• Try to get enough sleep at night, and rest when you need it.
• Talk to someone you trust or with your caregiver about your stress.
• Prenatal classes can be a fun way to share with others.

• AVOID SMOKING, DRUGS AND ALCOHOL
Smoking, drugs and alcohol can all harm the baby and limit baby’s growth. No amount is safe in pregnancy.

• Women who do not gain enough weight during pregnancy are more likely to deliver a low birth weight baby. Low birth weight babies are more likely to have health problems.
• Women who gain more weight than recommended may have health problems in pregnancy.
• Now is not the time to diet or lose weight. Talk to your caregiver if you have ever struggled with an eating disorder.
• Just like your baby, every pregnancy is unique and so is your body. Talk to your caregiver if you need support about your changing body.

Weight gain is an important part of pregnancy

Most women need to gain between 25-35 pounds (11.5-16 kg) during their pregnancy. Some a little more, some a little less.

• Weight gain is an important part of pregnancy. Eating well and gaining weight during pregnancy is not only good for you, but also good for your baby.
• The recommended amount of weight gain for a healthy baby depends on your weight before pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider about the weight gain range that is best for you.
• Knowing the weight gain range is right for you will help you to gain enough weight without gaining too much weight.

What will impact my weight gain?

• EAT WELL
Your baby shares the food you eat and both of you need to eat well. It is important to eat nutritious foods and to take a prenatal vitamin every day for the baby to grow. You are eating for two but not like two. During your second and third trimester of pregnancy, most women need to add an extra 2 to 3 food servings from the food guide each day. Add healthy snacks to your day like a piece of fruit and yogurt or an extra piece of whole grain toast and an extra glass of milk.

• BE ACTIVE
Daily, moderate activity during your pregnancy is important. Walking and swimming are fun and safe ways to stay active in pregnancy.

• REDUCE STRESS
Some stress is normal, but too much can stop you from taking care of yourself. Here are a few ideas that may help:
• Try to get enough sleep at night, and rest when you need it.
• Talk to someone you trust or with your caregiver about your stress.
• Prenatal classes can be a fun way to share with others.

• AVOID SMOKING, DRUGS AND ALCOHOL
Smoking, drugs and alcohol can all harm the baby and limit baby’s growth. No amount is safe in pregnancy.

• Women who do not gain enough weight during pregnancy are more likely to deliver a low birth weight baby. Low birth weight babies are more likely to have health problems.
• Women who gain more weight than recommended may have health problems in pregnancy.
• Now is not the time to diet or lose weight. Talk to your caregiver if you have ever struggled with an eating disorder.
• Just like your baby, every pregnancy is unique and so is your body. Talk to your caregiver if you need support about your changing body.

Congratulations, you are having a baby!
Pregnancy is a special time... take good care of yourself.

How much weight gain is right for you?

• Weight gain is an important part of pregnancy. Eating well and gaining weight during pregnancy is not only good for you, but also good for your baby.
• The recommended amount of weight gain for a healthy baby depends on your weight before pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider about the weight gain range that is best for you.
• Knowing the weight gain range is right for you will help you to gain enough weight without gaining too much weight.

What will impact my weight gain?

• EAT WELL
Your baby shares the food you eat and both of you need to eat well. It is important to eat nutritious foods and to take a prenatal vitamin every day for the baby to grow. You are eating for two but not like two. During your second and third trimester of pregnancy, most women need to add an extra 2 to 3 food servings from the food guide each day. Add healthy snacks to your day like a piece of fruit and yogurt or an extra piece of whole grain toast and an extra glass of milk.

• BE ACTIVE
Daily, moderate activity during your pregnancy is important. Walking and swimming are fun and safe ways to stay active in pregnancy.

• REDUCE STRESS
Some stress is normal, but too much can stop you from taking care of yourself. Here are a few ideas that may help:
• Try to get enough sleep at night, and rest when you need it.
• Talk to someone you trust or with your caregiver about your stress.
• Prenatal classes can be a fun way to share with others.

• AVOID SMOKING, DRUGS AND ALCOHOL
Smoking, drugs and alcohol can all harm the baby and limit baby’s growth. No amount is safe in pregnancy.

• Women who do not gain enough weight during pregnancy are more likely to deliver a low birth weight baby. Low birth weight babies are more likely to have health problems.
• Women who gain more weight than recommended may have health problems in pregnancy.
• Now is not the time to diet or lose weight. Talk to your caregiver if you have ever struggled with an eating disorder.
• Just like your baby, every pregnancy is unique and so is your body. Talk to your caregiver if you need support about your changing body.

Congratulations, you are having a baby!
Pregnancy is a special time... take good care of yourself.
Exercise during Pregnancy

Exercise is good for healthy pregnant women who are receiving prenatal care. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada recommends that women without complications in their pregnancies get regular aerobic and strength-conditioning exercise. Moderate exercise / activity is safe for most pregnant women, but it's always a good idea to talk to your doctor before you start an exercise program.

Exercise can improve your posture, relieve back pain and other discomforts related to pregnancy, and prepare you for the challenges of childbirth. Most women can begin or continue to exercise during pregnancy. Try exercise classes designed specifically for pregnant women or classes that offer safe variations for pregnant women. Many pregnant women find exercising in the water, such as swimming or water aerobics, most comfortable.

Stay at your pre-pregnancy level of fitness

In the early stages of pregnancy, some women can continue their pre-pregnancy exercise routines (including running, aerobics, biking, roller-skating, skiing, weight lifting, or other physically strenuous activities). Other women find it necessary to take it easy during the first weeks of pregnancy but can return to their usual exercise after their morning sickness or extreme fatigue subsides.

For women who did not exercise before they became pregnant, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada recommends beginning with 15 minutes of continuous exercise 3 times a week, increasing gradually to 30-minute sessions 4 times a week.

While you are pregnant, listen to your body.

- When you're fatigued, take it easy, but don't become completely inactive. Mild to moderate aerobic exercise, such as walking, helps your mood and keeps your energy up.
- If you like regular strenuous exercise, pay attention to your body's signals to gradually slow down or change your routine as your pregnancy advances.

Fuel your body

Eat a small snack or drink juice 15 to 30 minutes before you exercise. Do not exercise on an empty stomach. If you have not eaten, your body may run low on glucose, causing your liver to release substances known as ketones or ketoacids into your blood. Ketones are harmful to a fetus.

Continue to eat a balanced diet. Pregnant women who do not exercise require an additional 150 to 300 calories a day. When you exercise during pregnancy, increase your caloric intake.

Stay hydrated and avoid overheating

Do not become overheated while exercising. To avoid dehydration, drink plenty of fluids before, during, and after exercise. Continue drinking liquids after exercise even if you do not feel thirsty. This will help you stay hydrated.
Be careful

To prevent fetal injury, avoid sports that can involve potential contact, such as ice hockey, soccer, and basketball. Vigorous exercise above 1830 m (6000 ft) and scuba diving can be dangerous for your fetus. Unless you are a competitive athlete, avoid strenuous activity, and exercise only in moderation. You should be able to talk while you are working out. Do not exercise to the point that you feel tired.

Stop what you are doing and contact your doctor if you notice any of the following:

- Excessive fatigue or shortness of breath
- Pain or cramping, especially in the back or pelvic area
- Vaginal bleeding or rupture of the membranes
- Dizziness
- Pounding heartbeat (palpitations) or unusual sensations in your chest
- Persistent contractions

After your fourth month of pregnancy, avoid any exercise that requires you to lie flat on your back on a hard surface, such as sit-ups and some yoga poses. The increasing size and weight of your uterus will press on the large blood vessel that returns blood from your lower body to your heart.

As your pregnancy advances (usually during the second trimester), unstable joints, an expanding abdomen, and an altered centre of gravity can make you more unstable on your feet. Also, by then your uterus is mostly above the protective circle of your pelvic bones. Avoid exercises that might cause you to fall, such as skiing or roller-skating.

General guidelines

- Do not start a new or more strenuous exercise program without first checking with your doctor.
- Do not use exercise to lose weight.
- Avoid exercising during hot, humid weather or if you are not feeling well.
- Discontinue dangerous sports, such as horseback or motorcycle riding, water-skiing, diving, parachute jumping, or scuba diving.

There is no evidence that exercise causes miscarriage. But if you have a history of repeated miscarriages, your doctor may advise you to avoid exercises that require your body to bear extra weight (such as running) during the first trimester.

Your baby will not be harmed if you can't exercise because of a complication of your pregnancy or an existing chronic illness or condition. You may be able to do simple exercises in bed, with your doctor's approval.

Last Revised November 18, 2010

Author: Healthwise Staff

Medical Review: Sarah Marshall, MD - Family Medicine & Brian D. O'Brien, MD - Internal Medicine & Kirtly Jones, MD, MD - Obstetrics and Gynecology
You're about to start on the most amazing journey ever! We hope this calendar will help you to look forward to and enjoy your pregnancy. It is not intended to take the place of prenatal care.

If you have any questions or concerns about your pregnancy, please contact your health care provider.
HealthLine is a free, private 24-hour phone line, staffed by registered nurses. They can give you instant, expert health advice and help you decide whether you should:
• treat your own symptoms
• go to a clinic
• wait to see your health care provider
• or go to a hospital emergency room
Call 1-877-800-0002 or visit: www.health.gov.sk.ca/healthline-online

Are You Covered?
• To receive maternity benefits you must fill out an Employment Insurance claim either online or at your Service Canada Centre. To get these benefits, your regular weekly earnings must go down by more than 40%, and you must have worked 600 hours in the last 52 weeks or since your last claim. Apply as soon as you stop working, as you may lose benefits if you wait longer than 4 weeks. You will need to provide:
  ✓ Your Social Insurance Number
  ✓ A Record of Employment form
  ✓ Personal I.D. (such as your driver’s license or birth certificate)
  ✓ Banking information for direct deposit
  ✓ The expected or actual birth date of your child
  ✓ Details about your last job
For more information, visit: www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/sc/ei/benefits/maternityparental.shtml

• Do you have health insurance? Saskatchewan Health does not cover ambulance services, or private/semi-private hospital rooms.

Infant Car Seats are required by law. Use a car seat every time your child travels in a vehicle. Look for one that is easy to use and fits in your vehicle. Read the directions carefully to make sure that the seat is used properly at all times. If using a second hand car seat, make sure that it has never been in a crash and that it is not past the expiration date stamped on the seat. Infants need to be in the back seat, facing backwards. For more information, including car seat guidelines and recalls, call 1-800-667-8015 or visit: www.sgi.sk.ca/cgi_pub/road_safety/child_restraints.htm

Alcohol and drugs are not safe in any amount. They go through the placenta directly to your baby. Drinking alcohol can cause a lot of problems for your baby such as birth defects, as well as troubles with growth, behaviour and learning. Using drugs can cause you to miscarry or have a stillbirth. Your baby may be born too small or too soon, have withdrawal symptoms, birth defects and many problems with learning and behaviour.

Plan to quit alcohol, drugs and/or smoking:
1. Get Ready—Think about how quitting will help you and your baby. Set a quit date and stick to it.
2. Get support and encouragement—Ask family and friends to support you. Ask others not to smoke, use drugs or drink around you.
3. Be prepared to handle “slips”—Set a new date to get back on track.
**Self Care:**
- Be kind to yourself
- Ask for and accept help with baby and housework
- Keep active - go for a walk
- Get enough sleep - at least 6 hours a day
- Eat healthy and regularly
- Keep away from alcohol, tobacco and drugs
- Take medications as prescribed
- Try yoga or other activities to help you relax
- Look for a support group or other supports in your community
- Talk to your health care provider

1 in 5 women go through **depression in pregnancy or postpartum depression**. Mood swings, tiredness, trouble eating and sleeping all happen at certain times during pregnancy, but these can be signs of depression if they last for a long time. Other signs of depression are:
- Always feeling sad
- Feelings of despair, guilt, or worthlessness
- Thinking often about death and suicide
- Not being able to concentrate or do the things you normally do
- Not being able to sleep, or sleeping a lot

**Did you know that if you are depressed:**
- You are more likely to use alcohol and drugs?
- You are more likely to skip your medical appointments?
- You may not bond with your baby?
- You are less likely to breastfeed your baby?
- Your baby may be born too soon or too small?
- Your baby may have more health and behaviour problems?
- Your baby can be affected by your stress hormones and chemicals?
- Your partner is twice as likely to be depressed?

That's why it is important to pay attention to these feelings, and ask for help if you need it. Talk to your health care provider, partner, family and friends and ask for their help and support.

For more information, visit: [www.skmaternalmentalhealth.ca](http://www.skmaternalmentalhealth.ca)

**Professional help** includes counselling, support groups, and medications, often used together. If you are currently taking prescribed medication to help your mood do not stop without talking to your health care provider.

Partners, family and friends can help as well:
- Listen to Mom and support her feelings
- Ask her how you can help
- Encourage her to get professional help
- Spend time with baby
- Learn more about maternal mental health
- Get the support you need

For help, contact:
- Your health care provider
- HealthLine anytime: 1-877-800-0002
**Uterus** - The organ that holds your growing baby

**Amniotic Sac** - The membrane inside your uterus

**Amniotic Fluid** - The liquid that surrounds your baby, protects it from bumps and lets it move easily

**Placenta** - Connects baby to the mother through the **umbilical cord** - brings food and oxygen to baby and takes away waste

**Folic acid** helps to prevent birth defects in your baby's spine and brain, right from the first day of pregnancy. Foods that have lots of folic acid are dark green vegetables (broccoli, peas, brussel sprouts and spinach), oranges/orange juice, and whole grain breads. Take a daily prenatal vitamin that has folic acid. Talk to your health care provider about how to make sure you are getting enough folic acid.

**My Prenatal Appointment:**
- **Date:** ________________
- **Time:** ________________
- **Questions I want to ask:**

**You may notice or feel:**
- Tender, painful, tingling, and/or larger breasts
- Mood changes
- Tiredness
- Your menstrual periods stop
- Headaches, light-headedness
- A need to pee more often
- More vaginal discharge
- Morning sickness
- Food cravings

**Regular prenatal care** is needed for both Mom and baby. You should start looking for a health care provider right away. Call and schedule your first prenatal appointment when your period is 2 - 4 weeks late. Prenatal appointments are a good time to ask questions or talk about any concerns you have. It is a good idea to write your questions down ahead of time, so that you don’t forget to ask. At your first prenatal appointment, you can expect to have a full physical exam. Blood and urine samples will be taken, along with a Pap test. At all of your prenatal appointments you will be weighed, and have your blood pressure and urine checked.

**Regular prenatal appointments** are usually scheduled:
- every 4 weeks until the 28th week of pregnancy
- then every 2 weeks until 36 weeks
- then once a week until delivery

**Your baby:**
- Is starting to grow - a placenta, heart, brain, spinal cord, nervous system, eyes, nose and ears are all forming
- Has grown 10,000 times in size, but is still only the size of a grain of rice
### How to use this calendar:

Starting with the month you became pregnant, put the appropriate month stickers in the marked areas. Fill in the date for each day of each month until you reach your due date. Week 1 starts on the first day of your last menstrual period.

### Week 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Week 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Week 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Week 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**In the centre of the calendar, there is a page of stickers for you to mark appointments, special events and memories.**

**Your body is changing even before you know you are having a baby!**

Hormonal changes will stop your menstrual cycle as your body begins to prepare your uterus to cushion and feed your baby.

### 5 things to remember:

- Eat healthy food
- Be physically active
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, cigarettes and second hand smoke
- Visit your health care provider regularly
- Take a daily prenatal vitamin that includes folic acid
Your baby:
- Has a beating heart
- Is developing lungs, liver, kidneys, stomach, intestines, gall bladder, pancreas, bones, and blood vessels
- Has a mouth, teeth, arms and legs
- Is growing quickly ~ Baby is curled up like a comma with its head on its chest
- Has all of the major organs, but they are not fully formed or working yet

Your baby needs iron to grow and develop. Babies not getting enough iron may have more illnesses and problems learning. Be sure to eat iron-rich foods, such as:
- Red meat, eggs and poultry
- Whole grain and enriched breads and cereals
- Dried beans, peas and lentils

Eating foods high in Vitamin C, like oranges, berries, tomatoes and potatoes helps your body absorb the iron from other foods.

Try to eat 3 meals a day with a variety of foods from each of the 4 food groups:
- Vegetables and fruits
- Grain products
- Milk and alternatives
- Meat and alternatives

Make sure to drink water when you are thirsty. Visit the Canada Food Guide online: www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

Helpful tips for coping with morning sickness:
- Eat small amounts of food every 1-2 hours
- Eat before you get out of bed and get up slowly
- Don’t eat fatty, fried, and spicy foods
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Don’t eat foods that make you feel sick and have someone else cook if food smells bother you
- Get lots of rest and plenty of fresh air
- Try smelling fresh cut lemons

My Prenatal Appointment:
Date: __________
Time: __________
Questions I want to ask:

You may notice or feel:
- Your breasts are getting bigger and the brown part of the nipple (areola) is getting darker
- Dizziness ~ If you feel light headed, get up slowly

Vomiting from morning sickness can leave stomach acid in your mouth which can cause tooth decay. If you vomit, rinse your mouth with water or mouthwash afterwards.

Hormonal changes during pregnancy can cause swollen gums that bleed easily. Be sure to brush and floss daily.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 5</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Baby is about the size of an apple seed!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Baby has grown to the size of a small grape!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 7</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Your “young one” is about the size of a strawberry! Almost everything has formed but baby has much more growing to do!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 8</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Remember, no amount of alcohol or drugs is safe while you are pregnant. Check with your health care provider or pharmacist before taking any medications, or call the SK Consumer Drug Information Line at 1-800-665-3784.
Your baby:
- Can send and receive brain messages
- Has eyelids closed over the eyes
- Has fingers and toes, complete with fingerprints and toe prints
- Is growing vocal cords and sex organs
- Has skin, complete with hair follicles
- Has a working placenta and umbilical cord
- May be about 7.5 cm (3 inches) long and weigh about 28 grams (1 ounce)
- Can kick and move around, but you won’t be able to feel it yet

Nervous about gaining weight during pregnancy? Weight gain is needed to have a healthy baby. Talk to your health care provider about your healthy weight gain, or check out Health Canada’s advice at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/prenatal/qa-gest-gros-qr-eng.php

On average, most women gain 11-16 kg (25—35 lbs), made up of:
- Baby: 3-3.5 kg (7-8 lbs)
- Placenta: 0.5-1 kg (1-2 lbs)
- Amniotic fluid: 1 kg (2 lbs)
- Blood increase: 1-2 kg (3-4 lbs)
- Uterus: 1-1.4 kg (2-3 lbs)
- Breasts: 1-1.4 kg (2-3 lbs)
- Extra body fluid, fat & tissue: 4.5 kg (10 lbs)

You may notice or feel:
- Heartburn
- Food cravings
- Constipation ~ be sure to drink lots of water, eat right, and exercise

Staying active during pregnancy will help to cut down on swelling, leg cramps, tiredness, backache, and constipation. It will also help you get ready for labour and delivery.

Only do what feels comfortable for you ~ don’t overdo it. Walking, biking, swimming and yoga are all good kinds of exercise during pregnancy.

As your baby and your body grow larger, you may have mixed feelings about having sex. Changes in sexual drive during pregnancy are common and are usually because of hormonal and body changes. Most healthy women can have sex during pregnancy. Don’t be embarrassed to ask your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.

Remember that getting a sexually transmitted disease can be harmful to you and your baby. Be sure to practice safe sex and use a condom.

My Prenatal Appointment:
Date: ___________  
Time: ___________

Questions I want to ask:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
<td>___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Baby’s fingerprints are formed!

Inner ear is now completely formed!

Baby is becoming more and more active!

---

*Little fingernails and toenails are growing on your baby’s tiny fingers and toes.*
Sometimes when you are pregnant, you may feel a little pain or cramping, called *growing pains*. These are felt because you, your baby, and your uterus are growing. The organs inside you need to move around to make room for your baby. You should let your health care provider know if you are feeling these.

It is important that you always wear a **seatbelt** in a vehicle. Always wear the lap belt low over your hips, below the baby. Wear the shoulder belt tightly against your chest. Do not put the shoulder belt under your arm or behind your back.

**Your baby:**
- Is now completely formed and all the major organs are working
- Has eyebrows, eyelashes and a bit of hair on head
- Can bend all limbs
- Can smile, frown and suck
- Can hear your heartbeat and voice
- Soft, downy hair (lanugo) is starting to grow and cover baby’s body
- Has doubled in size and may be about 16 cm (6 inches) long and weigh about 135 grams (4 ounces)

**You may notice or feel:**
- The appearance of small lumps on your nipples (Montgomery’s Tubercles)
- A brownish tan on your face (chloasma or mask of pregnancy)
- A dark line running from your belly button to the pubic area (Linea Nigra)
- Little nausea, less need to pee, less tiredness

**Sometimes when you are pregnant, you may feel a little pain or cramping, called **growing pains**. These are felt because you, your baby, and your uterus are growing. The organs inside you need to move around to make room for your baby. You should let your health care provider know if you are feeling these.

**My Prenatal Appointment:**
Date: ______________
Time: ______________
Questions I want to ask:

Many of the signs of your pregnancy in the first few months are caused by changing hormones. Later signs are caused by baby and Mom’s growth.

As the uterus and baby grow and push on your bladder, you may need to pee more often. Avoid coffee, tea and cola drinks. Let your health care provider know if you have signs of a **bladder infection**, which can include:
- Strong constant need to pee
- Sharp pain or burning when you pee
- Feeling like you need to pee but not being able to
- Not being able to fully empty bladder
- Leaking a little pee
- Cloudy, dark, smelly or bloody pee
- Soreness in lower abdomen, back or sides
- Low grade fever
- Slight chills and/or fatigue

Infections can cause early labour.

It is important that you always wear a **seatbelt** in a vehicle. Always wear the lap belt low over your hips, below the baby. Wear the shoulder belt tightly against your chest. Do not put the shoulder belt under your arm or behind your back.

Many of the signs of your pregnancy in the first few months are caused by changing hormones. Later signs are caused by baby and Mom’s growth.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 13</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 14</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 15</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 16</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You have reached the second trimester of pregnancy. Baby is now about the size of a peach!

Baby's ears are now formed.

Baby's bones continue to form and get harder.

*At your prenatal appointment, your health care provider may be able to hear your baby's heartbeat.*

*Your baby can hear your voice. Talk, sing and read to your baby.*
Pregnancy is a time of change, both physically and emotionally, which can cause stress. Too much stress is not healthy for either you or your baby. Remember that by taking care of yourself, you are also taking care of your baby. Be sure to:

- Make time for yourself every day
- Exercise daily
- Get lots of sleep
- Eat healthy foods
- Make plans to have help at home after your baby is born
- Contact your hospital to find out about admission procedures and possibly schedule a tour

Your baby:
- Can grasp hands and suck thumb
- Has fingernails, toenails and own unique set of fingerprints and footprints
- Begins to store some of your antibodies
- Has thin, shiny skin that is covered with a creamy protective coating (vernix)
- May be about half the length of a full term baby ~ about 25 cm (10 inches) long and weigh about 340 grams (12 ounces)

Prenatal Testing is any test done before your baby is born. They may consist of routine blood tests, urine tests, and other in depth testing that will give your health care provider more information to help you and your baby. Some of these tests may include:

- Ultrasound: Uses sound waves to show the size and development of your baby. They can even estimate the date that your baby may be born.
- Glucose Tolerance Test: May be given between 24 and 28 weeks to check your blood sugar.
- HIV Testing: Many women who have HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) are not aware that they have it. It is recommended that all pregnant women be tested for HIV.
- Group B Streptococcus Infection: A bacteria that could harm your baby if left untreated. Your health care provider may test for this later in pregnancy.
- Fetal Movement Counting: Is done to check your baby's health, or if you notice a decrease in your baby's movements.
- Amniocentesis: Can give information about genetic abnormalities, lung development, age and sex of the baby. Your health care provider may order this if more information is needed.
- Screening for Sexually Transmitted infections such as Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea and Syphilis.

My Prenatal Appointment:
Date: ________________
Time: ________________
Questions I want to ask:

You may notice or feel:
- Early movements, which feel like butterfly flutters (quickening)
- Leaking of breast fluid

Your Public Health Nurse is available to answer your questions. She may also offer group or private prenatal classes. Look in your phone book for local contact numbers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby's muscles are getting stronger.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As lungs develop, breathing movements begin. Baby can even get the hiccups!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby has times of being asleep and being awake.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*You are halfway there! You may even feel baby kicking once in a while!*
Preterm Labour occurs before 37 weeks of pregnancy and may result in the early (premature) birth of your baby. Call your hospital/health care provider if you have:

- Uterine contractions or menstrual-like cramps, either occasional or continuous
- Pressure in your pelvis, thighs or back
- A change in vaginal discharge, especially if it is pink tinged
- Fluid leaking or gushing from your vagina

Your baby:

- Responds to sounds and touch ~ loud sounds may make baby jump ~ the sounds of your heart and stomach are comforting
- Has well developed muscles and organs, except for the lungs
- Kicks and grasps strongly
- Is putting on fat
- Has wrinkled skin
- May be about 29 cm (11 inches) long and may weigh about 500 grams (1 lb) ~ about the size of a pound of butter

Preterm Labour

We hope you are enjoying this prenatal calendar. We value your opinion. Please remember to fill out and return the evaluation form located inside the back cover, or you can take our online survey at:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DTX8Z39

My Prenatal Appointment:
Date: _____________  
Time: _____________

Questions I want to ask:

You may notice or feel:

- Low back pain
- Throbbing of your legs and appearance of varicose veins
- Hard, dry bowel movements (constipation)
- Mild swelling of ankles, feet, hands and face

Back Pain? Try this:

- Sit in straight backed chairs
- Wear shoes with low heels, such as running shoes
- Try heat and massage, or apply cold
- Bend your knees when lifting objects

Constipation? Eat high fibre foods like whole grain breads and cereals, fruits, vegetables, and legumes ~ such as brown beans, kidney beans and lentils. Remember to drink lots of fluids ~ water, milk and other non-caffeinated drinks. Be sure to exercise regularly. It may help to raise your legs by putting your feet up on a stool when using the toilet.

Swollen ankles, feet, hands or face?
Remember to:

- Put your feet up whenever you can ~ this will also help to lessen leg cramps and prevent varicose veins
- Wear loose clothes
- Try exercises like walking or swimming
- Talk to your health care provider
Some pregnant women get high blood sugar or Gestational Diabetes. Your health care provider may order a **Glucose Tolerance Test**. Diet and exercise are usually the best forms of treatment, but in some cases, injections may be needed.
Breastfeeding is the best way to help your baby grow and develop. Breast milk is easy to digest and has the right nutrition for baby. As your baby grows, your milk will also change to keep up with your baby's needs. Breast milk is always safe, fresh and exactly the right temperature. It is ready for baby at a moment's notice, and you don't have to heat it, boil water, or sterilize bottles. This makes night time feedings, travelling and shopping a lot easier. Breastfed babies generally have less infections in the first year of life.

Although breastfeeding is natural, it may take some time for you and your baby to learn and practice. The first 2 weeks are hardest, but if you stick with it, you can work through most problems. If you have trouble, be sure to ask for help. Your health care provider, Public Health Nurse, or friends who have breastfed can all help and support you.

RH Test: Talk to your health care provider about your blood type. If you have RH negative blood, you may be given a RhoGAM injection at 28 weeks and again after delivery.

Sudden swelling in your hands and feet? These can be signs of higher than normal blood pressure known as toxemia (also called eclampsia and preeclampsia). Other symptoms include a rise in blood pressure or sudden weight gain. See your health care provider right away if you have any of these symptoms.

Mothers may recover from pregnancy, labour, and delivery sooner when they breastfeed. It can help you to lose the weight gained during pregnancy and may protect against breast cancer and other illnesses later in life.

Your baby:
- Is becoming more active
- Opens eyes and squints
- Can purse lips, and open and close mouth
- Can feel pain, smell, taste, and see light

You may notice or feel:
- Upper back pain
- Trouble sleeping

My Prenatal Appointment:
Date: ________________
Time: ____________
Questions I want to ask:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

First teeth are beginning to form under baby's gums.

Baby's five senses are now fully developed!

Baby may be able to recognize your voice!

*Baby is lean and the skin is becoming less wrinkled. Baby can now store nutrients for future use.*
Braxton Hicks are irregular tightening of the uterus (contractions) which happen more often during the last weeks of pregnancy. They help the cervix and uterus get ready for the birth of your baby. If they become regular or more than 4 in an hour while resting, call your health care provider immediately.

Your baby is moving into position for birth. Your health care provider will feel your belly and tell you what position your baby is in. Headfirst is the most common position and the best for delivery. Other positions include bum first (breech), shoulder first, or face first which may make labour more difficult and may require a cesarean delivery.

Your baby:
- May grow about 1 cm (1/2 inch) and gain about 200 grams (1 ounce) each week
- Is starting to shed lanugo ~ soft, downy hair remains only on its back and shoulders
- Will get into position for birth, most likely with head down
- Can hiccup, cry, taste sweet and sour, as well as respond to light

My Prenatal Appointments:
Date: ______ Time: ______
Date: ______ Time: ______
Questions I want to ask:

You may notice or feel:
- Stretch marks
- More tiredness
- Braxton Hicks contractions
- Muscle cramps in your legs, especially at night

You may see pinkish-red streaks (stretch marks) on your stomach, breasts and hips. Some women use lotion on these marks to lessen them. They will turn silvery and get thinner after your baby is born.

As your baby grows, your uterus grows too, and slows down the blood flow from your legs. This may cause leg cramps and swelling. Take short walks, try not to stand for long periods of time, and rest with your feet up whenever you can. Drink plenty of fluids. Swelling in your feet, fingers or face is normal; it should decrease when you rest. If you are worried about swelling, talk to your health care provider.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 29</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 30</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 31</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 32</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Organs are fully developed but will continue to mature as baby gets ready for birth!**

**Baby's sucking and swallowing skills continue to develop.**

**Your little one's brain is growing quickly!**

*Enjoy and share the movements of this life inside you with your partner.*

*Share your favourite music and talk to your baby often!*
### Third Trimester: Weeks 33 - 36

**Your baby:**
- Is round and plump
- Has hair on head
- Has smooth skin, covered with thick vernix ~ the lanugo is almost completely gone
- Continues to store your antibodies to fight disease after birth

**Caesarean Delivery** occurs when the baby must be delivered through a cut (incision) in the abdomen and uterus. This may be done with little warning to be sure that you and your baby have a safe and healthy delivery. Be sure to talk to your health care provider about any concerns.

**Immunizations** protect your baby from a disease before it makes your baby sick. They help your baby’s immune system make antibodies that fight disease. They are safe and cause only short term, minor side effects. In the last 50 years, immunizations have saved more lives in Canada than any other health program.

Plan to contact the Public Health Nurse in your area to book an appointment or to talk about immunizations soon after your baby is born.

**You may notice or feel:**
- Discomfort
- Discouraged
- Tired of being pregnant

**Shortness of breath** is normal later in pregnancy. You may feel more comfortable sleeping with an extra pillow behind your head to avoid lying flat on your back. As the baby moves lower, this should improve.

**My Prenatal Appointments:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Questions I want to ask:**

More Moms succeed with breastfeeding when their partner helps and supports them. **Dad can help** with encouraging words and by bringing the new Mom food and drink while she is breastfeeding.

Once baby is full, Dad can take over. Babies need lots of physical contact and Dad’s loving arms are a wonderful place for baby to be. Burp or rock baby on Dad’s shoulder. Try letting your full breastfed baby lie on Dad’s chest.

Breastfeeding is one of the most important things parents can do to get baby off to a good start in life.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 33</strong></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 34</strong></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 35</strong></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 36</strong></td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As you enter your last few weeks of pregnancy, there is less space for your baby to move around.

- Baby can blink!
- Baby is starting to develop an immune system!
- Baby's arms and legs are getting chubby now!
**Third Trimester: Weeks 37 - 40**

**Your baby:**
- Is chubby and stores body fat
- Has mature lungs
- May have the hiccups often
- Has a dark, tar-like substance in his or her intestines ~ this is meconium and will be baby's first poop (bowel movement)

Over the past 40 weeks, your uterus has grown from 7 cm (3 inches) to 30 cm (12 inches) around. The fluid in the amniotic sac has increased from 1 drop to 1 litre. The placenta has grown to about 18 cm (7 inches) around and weighs about 5-1 kg (1-2 lbs). Your baby has grown from 1 tiny cell to over 200 million.

**Things to pack for your hospital stay:**
- Sanitary pads
- Personal items (toothbrush, deodorant, etc)
- 2-3 pairs front opening pajamas
- Nursing bra and pads
- At least 3 pairs of underwear
- Slippers/socks
- Lip balm/lip gloss
- Massage oil or talcum powder
- Snacks and drinks
- Camera
- Music/books/magazines
- List of friend/family phone numbers
- Calling card or cell phone
- Loose fitting clothes to wear home

**My Prenatal Appointments:**
Date: _____ Time: _______
Date: _____ Time: _______
Date: _____ Time: _______
Date: _____ Time: _______

Questions I want to ask:

**Things to pack for baby:**
- Infant car seat approved by Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS)
- Undershirts and sleepers
- Diapers (newborn size)
- Blanket, seasonal wear

**Signs of Labour**
Labour is the rhythmic contractions of the uterus that help to open the cervix and let your baby be born. You may have abdominal cramps, pressure in your back, pelvis and legs, pinkish discharge, or leaking fluid.

If you think you are in labour, call your hospital/health care provider and report:
- What time your contractions started
- How far apart they are
- How long they last
- If you have any bleeding or leaking fluid
- Your distance from the hospital

True labour contractions will become stronger, longer and more often.

**In-Hospital Questionnaire at Birth**
In Saskatchewan, all babies are screened at birth so that parents and babies get the best care right from the start. The questions are about your pregnancy and delivery, home life, and general health. Answering these questions will help develop and provide the programs and supports that families need. Information from the questionnaire will be shared with your Public Health Nurse. This will help her offer the supports or information you may need.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 37</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

You may feel baby ‘drop’ into the birth canal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 38</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Baby is considered full term!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 39</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Baby’s organs can function on their own!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 40</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*By the end of this month, baby may be about 51 cm (20 inches) long and weigh about 3.2 kg (7 pounds).*
If this is your first baby, you may worry that you are not ready to take care of a newborn. Here are some basic **newborn safety tips**:
- Be sure to always support baby’s neck with your hand, elbow or arm
- Always lay baby on his/her back on a firm surface ~ no pillows, sofas or waterbeds
- Always keep one hand on baby when changing diapers ~ falls happen quickly
- Be sure baby’s bathwater is lukewarm, never hot
- Keep baby protected from pets
- Be sure that crib bars are no more than \( \frac{2}{3} \) inches apart

You can learn more about newborn baby care by asking the nurses at the hospital, your health care provider, Public Health Nurse or friends who have had babies.

---

**Why Babies Cry**

Crying is the only way babies can tell you that they are hungry, wet, scared or lonely. Most babies cry for a total of 2 hours per day and may have a “fussy” time in the evening.

When your baby cries and has already been changed, fed and burped, here are some things to try:
- Pick baby up and talk softly
- Pat baby’s back or stroke baby’s head
- Rock baby in your arms or walk with baby against your shoulder

A crying baby can make anyone feel upset. Breathe deeply, be calm and know you have done your best.

Never shake a baby ~ this can cause permanent brain damage.

---

**The first 2 weeks at home with a new baby** can leave new parents feeling tired and overwhelmed.

Be sure to find out ahead of time what community resources are there to support you. You and baby will likely be home 24 – 72 hours after delivery. Your body may look and feel like it doesn’t belong to you ~ your vaginal blood flow may be heavy, and your breasts swollen. Don’t lift anything heavier than your baby for the first 6 weeks. Give yourself time to heal. A Public Health Nurse may visit you at home within the first few days. If you had a caesarean, you should see your health care provider after 2 weeks. For a vaginal birth, you should see your health care provider after 6 weeks.

Feed your baby whenever he or she shows signs of hunger. These may include sucking on fingers or fists, turning head and opening mouth (rooting), squirming, and fussing. Your baby will need to be fed every 1–3 hours. Expect to change diapers often as well.

Newborns don’t sleep through the night, so be sure to rest and nap whenever baby does. The first 2 weeks will be hard both physically and emotionally. Surround yourself with helpful people that you feel comfortable to have around. You may need help with cleaning, cooking, and laundry so that you will have enough time and energy to look after yourself and your new baby. Getting off to a good start sets the stage for weeks to come and will help you recover. Take it easy and be sure to ask for help...remember ~ **You’re worth it!**
If you’ve gone past your due date, don’t worry too much—you are not alone. Most women deliver after their expected due date. If you are overdue, your health care provider will watch you closely to make sure that you and baby are okay.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 41</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Brain Development**

The brain is the only organ not fully developed at birth. Each baby is born with about 100 billion brain cells just waiting to be connected. These connections let thinking and learning take place. A baby's experiences in life develop the brain. They shape the way a child thinks, feels, behaves and learns. Brain pathways that are used again and again become set. By age three, 85 - 90% of a child's brain has been developed.

Here are simple things to do to help support your baby's brain development:

1. Provide a safe and healthy home
2. Touch your baby with love
3. Talk and read to your baby
4. Sing and play music for your baby
5. Be a calm and steady presence in your baby’s life
Comfort, Play and Teach is a simple approach that builds on everyday activities. Through simple activities, parents can help their child to learn and create, to communicate, to love and trust, and to live with confidence and happiness.

- When you comfort your child, he/she learns to feel secure, loved and valued
- When you play with your child, she/he learns to explore and discover the world and his/her place in it
- When you teach your child, he/she learns how to relate to others, solve problems and communicate

When you comfort, play with and teach your child, you are supporting your child's development.

Check out our weekly parenting tips at:
www.shareitforward.wordpress.com

Share it Forward is about sharing parenting messages with others so that they can share them with others and so on...

Bonding is the sense of attachment that you and your baby feel for each other. Mothers and fathers can make the most of this by holding baby close, talking softly and looking into baby’s eyes.

- Timing is everything—The best time to bond with your baby is in the first year of life
- Nurture your baby—she/he needs to be held, rocked and cuddled
- Be consistent and predictable—Your baby needs to know what will happen next and how you will respond to him/her
- Listen to, sing and talk with your baby—One of the best things to do is to just stop, sit, listen and play with your baby. When you quietly listen, baby will show you who she/he really is

We need 4 hugs a day for survival
We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance
We need 12 hugs a day for growth

Regional KidsFirst Community
Developers work with anybody and everybody in communities for the good of families with young children. Their work actively promotes the importance of the early years and encourages community partnerships that make a positive difference for all children and families.

Other Valuable Parenting Web Sites:
- www.earlyyears.nesd.ca
- www.zerotothree.org
In order to provide useful prenatal information and resources, we ask that you take a few minutes to evaluate our prenatal calendar.

You may either cut off and mail this page, or you can take our online survey at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/DTX8Z39

1. What community do you live in?

2. Where did you receive your copy of the prenatal calendar?

3. How often did you use the calendar? (please circle)  Never  2-3 times  Once a month  Once a week  Daily

4. Was the calendar easy to use? (please circle)  Not at all  Not very  Somewhat  Quite Easy  Extremely Easy

5. Please rate the following from 1—5:
   Creating a Keepsake of Pregnancy Milestones  1  2  3  4  5
   Information on Baby’s Growth and Development  1  2  3  4  5
   Information on Mom’s Growth and Development  1  2  3  4  5
   Keeping Track of Prenatal Appointments and Questions  1  2  3  4  5

6. Did the information provided on the following influence any of the choices you made during your pregnancy? (please circle)
   Activity and Exercise  Yes  No
   Bonding and Brain Development  Yes  No
   Breastfeeding  Yes  No
   Car Seat and Seat Belt Use  Yes  No
   Immunizations  Yes  No
   Maternal Mental Health  Yes  No
   Nutrition and Healthy Eating  Yes  No
   Parenting Information  Yes  No
   Prenatal Tests  Yes  No
   Prenatal Vitamins, Folic Acid and Iron  Yes  No
   Regular Prenatal Care  Yes  No
   Smoking, Alcohol and/or Drug Use  Yes  No
   Supplies to Pack for the Hospital  Yes  No
   Ways Dad can be Helpful  Yes  No

7. From where else have you learned prenatal information? (please circle)
   Public Health Nurse  Friends/Family  Doctor/Midwife  Books/Magazines  TV/Internet/Media  Other:

8. Please provide any other comments or suggestions:

THANK YOU!

Please mail completed form to:
Regional KidsFirst
Box 655
CARLYLE, SK.
S0C 0R0

Or fax to (306) 453-2072