

Prenatal Education

Key Messages for Ontario



Routine Prenatal Care

Key Messages

A checkup before conceiving will help you prepare for pregnancy. Early and regular prenatal care will help you have a healthy pregnancy and baby.

A medical checkup before you are pregnant can help ensure you are in good health and are making healthy choices that support a healthy pregnancy. A checkup before you are pregnant can also screen for any illnesses or conditions that could affect your pregnancy.

The main goal of prenatal care is to ensure a healthy mother and baby. Regular prenatal care:

- ▶ Supports healthy pregnancy.
- ▶ Prevents and identifies health concerns.
- ▶ Provides the opportunity to ask questions.
- ▶ Provides links to helpful community services.

Ideally, prenatal care begins as soon as you learn you are pregnant. However, prenatal care at any point in pregnancy is good for your health and the health of your growing baby. Early confirmation of pregnancy is important because it allows for early prenatal care.

Prenatal care is delivered by different health care providers, including obstetricians, family doctors, Registered Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners.

Routine prenatal care delivered by any of these health care providers is covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). The availability of prenatal health care providers depends on where a mother lives and the health status of the mother and baby. In addition to a primary health care provider, health care professionals such as Registered Nurses, Registered Dietitians, and others may also be involved in providing prenatal care.

It is important that you have a primary health care provider you trust and feel comfortable with.

Routine prenatal care visits with your health care provider will help monitor your health and the health of your baby.

Routine prenatal care visits are scheduled at least monthly and usually include checking:

- ▶ Your weight.
- ▶ Your blood pressure.
- ▶ Your urine (for protein and sugar).
- ▶ Baby's growth.
- ▶ Baby's position (once able to determine).
- ▶ Baby's heart rate (once able to detect).

Each time you visit your health care provider, you can ask questions about your pregnancy. Your health care provider or another member of the health care team can provide you with information to help you during each stage of your pregnancy. A visit to your dentist is an important part of your prenatal care to help reduce the risk of cavities and bleeding gums.

Throughout your pregnancy, you may be offered a variety of different medical and laboratory tests. This could include:

- ▶ Diagnostic ultrasound.
- ▶ Blood tests.
- ▶ Urine tests.
- ▶ Prenatal screening tests, including genetic screening.
- ▶ Vaginal cultures or swabs.
- ▶ Glucose screening.
- ▶ Group B Streptococcus (GBS) screening.
- ▶ Other tests as needed.

Screening tests can give more information about you and your baby's health status, which will confirm what is normal or help identify health concerns. It is your choice whether or not to have prenatal screening.

Prenatal education programs are an important part of your care and support during pregnancy.

Prenatal education can be a series of classes, either online or in-person, provided for pregnant women, their partner, and/or support people.

Prenatal education can:

- ▶ Provide the information and skills you need to have a healthy pregnancy and baby.
- ▶ Promote a positive birthing experience.
- ▶ Prepare you for parenting.
- ▶ Prepare you for breastfeeding.
- ▶ Enhance communication between partners about pregnancy and parenting.

Learn more about how to access routine prenatal care.

The following may help you locate a health care provider in your area.

- ▶ Find a doctor or nurse practitioner through Health Care Connect:
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-family-doctor-or-nurse-practitioner>
- ▶ Visit ontario.ca/healthcareoptions to find a Community Health Centre, Family Health Team, Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic (NPLC) or Public Health Unit in your area.
- ▶ To find a midwife, visit: www.ontariomidwives.ca
- ▶ ServiceOntario INFOLine: 1-866-532-3161
- ▶ oMama
www.omama.com