

## PART I - HEALTHY AT ALL AGES



Women can do something very special that men cannot do: give birth to children. Having a baby is a very special time for many women.

It is important to know if your body is ready to have baby. This means you should be physically and emotionally healthy.

### Common Stages of Birthing and Parenting

#### Menstruation

monthly bleeding, having your period

#### Pregnancy

carrying a baby inside the womb (uterus)

#### Childbirth

when the baby comes out of the womb and is born

#### Taking Care of Your Baby

making sure your baby is healthy and growing strong

#### Menopause

when periods begin to stop and eventually stop completely



### This chapter will answer these questions:



- What is menstruation?
- What is menopause?
- How do I plan for pregnancy and childbirth?
- How do I care for my baby?

This book is not meant to diagnose any medical condition or problem. It is a tool to help you understand your body and your doctor's visits. Talk to your doctor about any specific concerns or worries.

## Major Changes in a Woman's Life

There are two normal changes in a woman's life: menstruation and menopause. These changes are the start and the end of fertility. **Fertility** means being able to have children. Women should not feel ashamed about these changes.

### Menstruation

**Menstruation** (the period) is a normal event in a woman's life cycle. It usually begins between the ages of 8 and 13. It is the start of the reproductive age called **puberty**. When a woman has her **period**, she bleeds through the vagina. It happens every month and usually lasts three to five days. Many women have cramps during this time.



#### COMMON PERIOD MYTHS

"You can't get pregnant during your period."

"Virgins shouldn't wear tampons."

"Women with their period shouldn't go swimming."

## Periods Affect Your Body and Your Feelings

Menstruation affects how many women feel. This is called PMS (Premenstrual Syndrome). Some symptoms may continue after the period starts.



### PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

cramps  
pain  
headaches  
bloating or  
feeling fat  
changes in  
sexual desire  
breast swelling  
nausea

### EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS

getting annoyed  
very quickly  
tiredness  
mood swings  
depression

There are different things that women can do if they have PMS and period symptoms. Simple lifestyle changes can help. These include:

- heating pad or hot water bottle
- medicine
- regular exercise
- a healthy diet
- little or no alcohol or caffeine





## Menopause

When a woman can no longer have a baby, she goes through **menopause**. This usually occurs when a woman is between 45 and 55 years old. Menopause is when a woman stops menstruating (having her period). It is a natural event and not a disease, but it is a big change that affects all women.

Menopausal women may experience many changes in their bodies. The following symptoms are common during menopause:

- **Hot flashes** make you feel hot all over the body.
- **Mood swings** are when you change from feeling happy to feeling sad very quickly.
- **Vaginal dryness** occurs because the body has less estrogen. Estrogen is a hormone that is higher in women. When women have less estrogen, sex may feel uncomfortable or painful.
- **Feeling tired or having trouble sleeping.**
- **Periods become irregular** and then stop.
- **Osteoporosis** is when bones become weak.
- **Weight gain** is more likely.



## What Can I Do to Treat My Menopause Symptoms?

It may take time before you know what treatment is best for you.

**BE PATIENT!**

However, **hormone replacement therapy (HRT)** can treat menopause.

HRT treats and may change your hormone levels. Hormones are chemicals naturally released in your body. Different hormones make you feel a different way. When a doctor changes your hormone levels, the way you feel may change, too. Always ask your doctor what might happen.

## Lifestyle Changes

There are easy lifestyle changes that you can make that may help you treat the symptoms of menopause. Relief may take longer, but there are fewer risks than hormone replacement therapy.

Women who maintain a healthy lifestyle before menopause often find it easier to cope with its symptoms. Eating a balanced diet and staying active are two major ways to stay healthy during menopause.

## Keywords

**cramps:** pain near the pelvis during periods

**fertility:** being able to have a baby

**estrogen:** hormone strong in women

**hormones:** chemicals in the body

**hormone replacement therapy:** doctor puts extra hormones in your body to help you cope with menopause

**menopause:** when periods stop and you can no longer become pregnant

**menstruation:** monthly bleeding from the vagina

**mood swings:** changes in emotions

**myth:** something that is not true

**osteoporosis:** disease that weakens one's bones

**periods:** same as menstruation

**puberty:** usually starts between the ages of 8 and 13, as children grow into adult bodies

### Treat Menopause with Lifestyle Changes



**Keep a good diet.**



**Stay active.**



**Find ways to relax.**



**Avoid smoking.**



**Limit alcohol.**



**Dress in light layers.**



## Key Points

- Menstruation and menopause are natural and normal.
- Ask your doctor how to treat the symptoms of menstruation and menopause.

## Check Your Learning

1. **What is menstruation?**
  - o A sign of being pregnant
  - o Bleeding through the vagina
  - o The end of puberty
2. **Which can be symptoms of menstruation or PMS?**
  - o Cramps, headaches, depression, and short temper
  - o Breast swelling, upset stomach, and bleeding from the vagina
  - o All of the above
3. **What is menopause?**
  - o Getting your period for the first time
  - o A disease that affects women
  - o When a woman stops having her period
4. **How can you treat menopause symptoms?**
  - o Smoke
  - o Eat healthy and be active
  - o Eat only fried foods

## What to Expect During Your Pregnancy & Delivery

Women have many options to avoid **pregnancy**. Once a woman is pregnant, her body will go through many changes. Pregnant women also have many options to deliver and to take care of their babies.

### Pregnancy

If a woman has not reached menopause yet, she may decide she wants a baby. If she does not practice birth control, she may become **pregnant**. This means that she is carrying at least one **fetus**. A fetus is a baby when it is still in the womb.



**Conception** is the start of the pregnancy. This occurs when sperm from a man reaches a female egg during sex. The first sign of pregnancy is usually a missed period.

### What Can I Expect During Prenatal Care?

Questions about  
medical history

Physical  
examinations

Blood and urine  
tests

Ultrasound: pictures and  
video of the fetus

Before and during pregnancy, it is important to have special health care, or **prenatal care**. Your doctor will probably refer you to an **obstetrician** or **gynecologist**, for regular visits. This doctor is often referred to as an OB/GYN.



**PRE = BEFORE**

**NATAL = BIRTH**

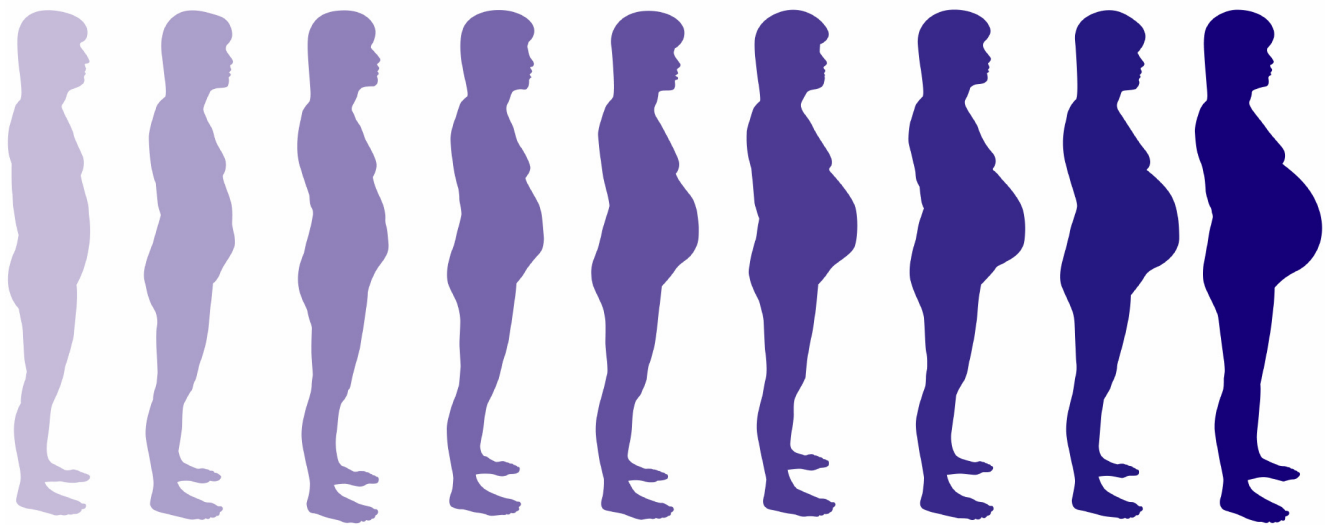
**PRENATAL = BEFORE BIRTH OR DURING PREGNANCY**

During your prenatal visits, your doctor will likely talk to you about:

- eating a balanced nutritious diet
- **NO** smoking, drinking alcohol or taking drugs
- taking vitamins

You will also hear your doctor use the word **trimester**. Every pregnancy has three trimesters: the beginning, middle, and end of the pregnancy. Each trimester lasts for three months, and certain growth and symptoms occur in each one. For instance, morning sickness or feeling sick to your stomach is more common in the first trimester.





### What Will Happen to My Body While Pregnant?

#### A Pregnancy May End Early

When it happens accidentally it is a **miscarriage**.

If it happens by a medical procedure it is an **abortion**.

The most obvious physical change in pregnancy is weight gain. As the baby grows, your belly will get bigger to make room for it.

Other symptoms may be:

- Back pain
- Constipation
- Sore breasts
- Feeling tired
- Wanting unusual foods
- Heartburn or nausea, especially in the morning
- Hemorrhoids
- Increased urination
- Swelling, especially of feet



**MAKE SURE YOU KEEP  
YOUR DOCTOR'S AND THE HOSPITAL'S  
PHONE NUMBERS AVAILABLE FOR YOU  
AND YOUR FAMILY.**

**HAVE AN OVERNIGHT BAG READY.**



## When Does the Baby Arrive?

**Childbirth** usually occurs about 40 weeks after conception. This is considered being “at full term.” A baby will most often be stronger and healthier the closer it is to full term. More time in the womb gives the baby time to fully develop.

The pregnancy may feel very uncomfortable towards the end. Having your baby as close to full term usually increases your chances of having a healthy baby!

You should call your doctor when you have unusual symptoms. Do not wait too long to contact your doctor, because the symptoms may be warning signs.

Unusual Pregnancy Symptoms Include:	
a high fever	strong nausea, chills
hard pains	feeling dizzy
bleeding	contractions
baby moves less or does not move at all	having an accident or serious fall

## Three Major Signs That the Baby is Coming!

- When the baby is fully developed, it will be ready to come out. **Contractions** begin when the uterus starts getting ready to push and deliver the baby. They will feel like very strong cramps.
- The cervix will widen to make room for the baby. This is called **dilation**. You won’t notice this, but the doctor can check it.
- The last major sign of childbirth is when the **water breaks**. There will be fluid leaking from the vagina when the bag surrounding the baby breaks.

## The Baby is on its Way!

A normal delivery is a vaginal birth. This means pushing the baby out when having contractions.

However, if there are complications, the doctor may do a **C- section** or a Cesarean surgery. This means that the doctor takes the baby out in an operation.



### Things You Can Do to Help Deliver the Baby

Ask your doctor about pain medication.

Sleep or walk between contractions.

Concentrate on breathing.

The baby's father, family member or friend can help you during labor.

## Keywords

**abortion:** a medical procedure to end pregnancy

**conception:** getting pregnant

**contractions:** tightening of the uterus

**C-section:** baby taken out of mother through surgery

**dilation:** cervix widens so baby can come out

**fetus:** baby inside mother's body

**miscarriage:** losing the fetus naturally

**obstetrician/gynecologist:** a doctor for women and pregnancy care. Often referred to as an OB/GYN.

**pregnancy:** a woman carries a baby inside her body for nine months until it is born

**prenatal care:** taking care of yourself and seeing your doctor regularly when you are pregnant

**trimester:** the beginning, middle and end of a pregnancy. Each part lasts three months.





## Key Points

- Pregnancy begins at conception, nine months before the baby arrives.
- Having a healthy pregnancy helps your baby.
- Visiting the obstetrician regularly and taking good care of yourself helps you have a healthy pregnancy.

## Check Your Learning

1. **What is conception?**
  - o Miscarriage
  - o The start of a pregnancy
  - o When a baby is ready to be born
2. **What is a symptom of pregnancy?**
  - o Getting thinner
  - o Having more energy
  - o Morning sickness or an upset stomach
3. **What is a vaginal birth?**
  - o A C-section
  - o An abortion
  - o A normal delivery

## Dialog

**Caller:** Hello, I am four months pregnant, and I am running a high fever.

**Clinic:** How high?

**Caller:** 101 degrees.

**Clinic:** Do you have any other symptoms?

**Caller:** I am also dizzy and have chills.

**Clinic:** Please go to the hospital right away. Check into the Emergency Room.







## Choosing What's Right For Your Baby

When a baby is born, there are many things the new mother must do to feed and keep her baby safe.

### Breastfeeding vs. Formula

One of the first decisions a mother will have to make is whether to breastfeed or to formula-feed her baby.

Breastfeeding is when the child drinks milk straight from the mother's breast. This may be difficult for some new mothers, but there are many benefits to breastfeeding.

If you are a new mother and are having trouble breastfeeding, your doctor or nurse can help you.

Store-bought baby **formula** is another way to feed a new baby. Formula must be prepared to provide nutrition for the baby.



BREASTFEEDING	VS	FORMULA
<p><b>Free</b></p> <p><b>Fights infections naturally</b></p> <p><b>Convenient</b></p> <p><b>Helps you lose weight</b></p> <p><b>Mothers are totally responsible for feedings</b></p> <p><b>Can prevent many diseases</b></p>		<p><b>Expensive</b></p> <p><b>Mix correctly, keep in refrigerator</b></p> <p><b>Wash bottles &amp; bottle nipples thoroughly</b></p> <p><b>Throw away unused formula</b></p> <p><b>Father and others can feed baby</b></p> <p><b>Warm carefully &amp; test before feeding baby</b></p>



### Breast Pumps Can Help!

Babies can drink breast milk even while mothers are at work or away from the child. **Breast pumps** allow mothers to store breast milk for babies to drink later.

Health departments often have breast pumps you can borrow to encourage mothers to breastfeed their new babies. You can also buy them at many department stores and drug stores.

## Vaccinations

It is very important that you take your baby and young children to the doctor for regular checkups. These visits with your child's doctor will help make sure your baby is healthy. Children's doctors are called **pediatricians**. Pediatricians also give your baby **vaccination shots**. Vaccinations are injections that prevent serious diseases.



*These visits are often called **well baby visits** because you go when your child is not sick.*

*You go to keep your child **WELL**.*



## Keywords

**breastfeeding:** giving the baby your breast milk

**breast pumps:** allow women to pump breast milk to feed their baby later

**formula:** special powder that you can buy to feed your baby

**pediatrician:** children's doctor

**vaccination:** injections against disease

**well baby visits:** doctor appointments for children to prevent sickness

## Check Your Learning

1. **What fights infections for babies?**
  - o Breastfeeding
  - o Water
  - o Formula
  
2. **What should you do during regular checkups for your baby?**
  - o Ask if your baby is developing ok
  - o Avoid follow-up questions
  - o Avoid asking any questions about vaccinations



## Dialog

**Pediatrician:** I am so glad to see that Kyra is doing so well!

**Mom:** Thank you, Doctor. I just wondered if she should have a flu vaccine.

**Pediatrician:** Let me look at her record. She's 18 months old and has had all vaccinations. Since this is October, I suggest that we give her the flu vaccine.

**Mom:** What will this do for her?

**Pediatrician:** The flu virus strikes in the winter. It can be serious. The vaccine helps Kyra avoid getting the flu. Kyra has been very lucky and healthy. I think it's a good idea to give her the vaccine.



## ENJOY YOUR BABY IN GOOD HEALTH!

### Florida WIC

WIC is a free program for Women, Infants and Children.

WIC provides healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and referrals to health care.

For more information and to see if you eligible call 1-800-342-3556 or visit [www.doh.state.fl.us/family/WIC](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/WIC).

## How Can I Learn More?

### Information

#### **Kids Health**

<http://kidshealth.org>

#### **The National Women's Health Information Center**

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/faq/menstruation.cfm>

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/benefits>

#### **Family Doctor**

<http://familydoctor.org>

#### **National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Baby Coalition**

<http://www.hmhb.org/pregnant.html>

#### **What to Expect When You're Expecting: Baby Basics Series**

[http://www.whattoexpect.org/baby\\_basics](http://www.whattoexpect.org/baby_basics)

#### **Healthy Roads Media**

<http://healthyroadsmedia.org/topics/pregreproduction.htm>

#### **La Leche League International (website available in several languages)**

<http://www.llli.org>

### Activities

#### **Centers for Disease Control, pregnancy worksheets**

<http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/topics/perinatal/1test2lives/materials.htm>

#### **La Leche League Podcasts**

<http://www.llli.org/podcasts.html?m=0,0,8>

### Free or Low Cost Services

#### **Breastfeeding Hotline**

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/breastfeeding/programs>

#### **Florida WIC**

<http://www.floridawic.org>