



# StarBabies

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A PUBLICATION OF TEXAS CHILDREN'S HEALTH PLAN

## Watch out for skin infections!

Your family's health is important. That's why we want you to know about skin infections. Learn about them on our website.

[texaschildrenshealthplan.org/skininfections](http://texaschildrenshealthplan.org/skininfections)



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**Take a look inside!**

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# Week 17

## Your baby's development

At about 5.1 inches (13 cm) from crown to rump and weighing 4.9 ounces (140 grams), your baby is still very tiny.

The placenta, which nourishes the fetus with nutrients and oxygen and removes wastes, is growing to accommodate your baby. It now contains thousands of blood vessels that bring nutrients and oxygen from your body to your baby's developing body.

## Your body

You may notice that your breasts have changed considerably since your pregnancy began. Hormones are preparing your breasts for milk production – more blood is flowing to the breasts, and the glands that produce milk are growing in preparation for breastfeeding. This can increase your breast size (many women increase one to two cup sizes) and make veins become visible. Buy supportive bras in a few different sizes to manage your breast growth during pregnancy.

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## Get the care you need

We want our expecting moms to have a great pregnancy. And that means it's important for you to go to the doctor. After all, a healthy mom and a happy baby begin with quality prenatal care!

**Don't wait. Get seen right away.** As soon as you think you're pregnant, you should schedule your first prenatal visit. Your OB/GYN will want to see you in your first trimester or within 42 days of joining Texas Children's Health Plan.

**Don't forget about your postpartum checkup.** It is also important for you to go for a postpartum checkup after having your baby. Your OB/GYN must see you within 3 to 6 weeks after delivery. To sign your newborn up for Medicaid, call 2-1-1 and report the birth of your child to Health and Human Services Commission or visit [yourtexasbenefits.com](http://yourtexasbenefits.com).

**Cervical Cancer Screening.** Routine pap smears are a key to the prevention and early detection of cervical

cancer. Women ages 21–29 years should be tested every 3 years. For women ages 30–65, a pap smear with testing for human papillomavirus (HPV) every 5 years is preferred but screening with just a pap smear every 3 years is OK. Plan a visit with your doctor or local community clinic.

**Mammography.** Women are encouraged to talk with their doctor about screening for breast cancer with a mammogram. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends annual mammograms beginning at age 40. Early detection can lead to improved outcomes in women diagnosed with breast cancer. Plan a visit with your doctor or local community clinic.

For help finding a doctor visit: [texaschildrenshealthplan.org](http://texaschildrenshealthplan.org) under "Find a Doctor" or call Member Services at 1-866-959-2555 (STAR). For help scheduling an appointment, you can call Member Services, email us at [healthplan@texaschildrens.org](mailto:healthplan@texaschildrens.org), or we can offer a 3-way call with you and the provider.

# Five ways to prevent early labor



It's best – and healthiest – for babies not to be born before they're due. Learn what you can do to prevent early labor.

## **See your doctor early and often**

- Call as soon as you know you're pregnant.
- Go to all prenatal appointments.
- Get screening tests to check your health and your baby's.

## **Prevent infection**

- Use condoms during sex.
- Wash your hands often.
- Don't change kitty litter.
- Avoid raw meat, fish, and unpasteurized cheese.

## **Protect your baby's health and well being**

- Don't drink alcohol, smoke, or use illegal drugs. Get help to quit, if needed.
- Take care of diabetes or other health problems.
- Leave an abusive relationship. Many groups can help.

## **Take care of your body**

- Eat a variety of healthy foods and drink lots of water.
- Take prenatal vitamins.
- Exercise if the doctor says it's OK.
- Aim for gaining about 25 35 pounds throughout pregnancy.

## **Take care of your mind**

- Do yoga, take walks, or do other things to relax.
- Tell your doctor if you feel anxious or depressed.
- Talk to a counselor or therapist about your worries.

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# Taking care of your mental health during pregnancy

Pregnancy brings a mix of feelings, and not all of them are good. If you're feeling worried, you're not alone. Worry is common, especially during a woman's first pregnancy or an unplanned one. It can be even harder if you're dealing with depression or anxiety.

For your health and your baby's, take care of yourself as much as you can. Be sure to eat well, exercise, get enough sleep, and take your prenatal vitamins.

If you're feeling worried, sad, or nervous, talk to someone about it – and know when to reach out for help.

## What feelings can happen?

Mood swings are normal during pregnancy. But if you feel nervous or down all the time, it could be a sign of something deeper going on. Stress over being pregnant, changes in your body during the pregnancy, and everyday worries can take a toll.

Some pregnant women may have depression or anxiety:

- **Depression** is sadness or feeling down or irritable for weeks or months at a time. Some women may have depression before getting pregnant. But it also can start during pregnancy for a number of reasons – for example, if a woman isn't happy about being pregnant or is dealing with a lot of stress at work or at home.

- **Anxiety** is a feeling of worry or fear over things that might happen. If you worry a lot anyway, many things can stress you out during pregnancy. You might worry that you won't be a good mother or that you can't afford to raise a baby.

Pregnant women may have other mental health issues, such as:

- Bipolar disorder (episodes of low-energy depression and high-energy mania)
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Panic attacks (sudden, intense physical responses with a feeling of unexplained and paralyzing fear)
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)
- Eating disorders (like bulimia or anorexia nervosa)

It's important to treat mental health concerns during pregnancy. Mothers who are depressed, anxious, or have another issue might not get the medical care they need. They might not take care of themselves, or they may use drugs and alcohol during the pregnancy. All of these things can harm a growing baby.

If you have a mental health issue, talk with your doctor so you can get the help you need during and after your pregnancy.





### **How can I get help?**

If you feel anxious or depressed, talk to a doctor, counselor, or therapist, and get help right away. The sooner treatment starts, the sooner you'll feel better. Also talk to a doctor about your overall health and any mental health issues you've had in the past. It's best for your doctor to know your full medical history, in case anything comes up during or after your pregnancy.

### **How are problems treated?**

Treatment for mental health problems may include:

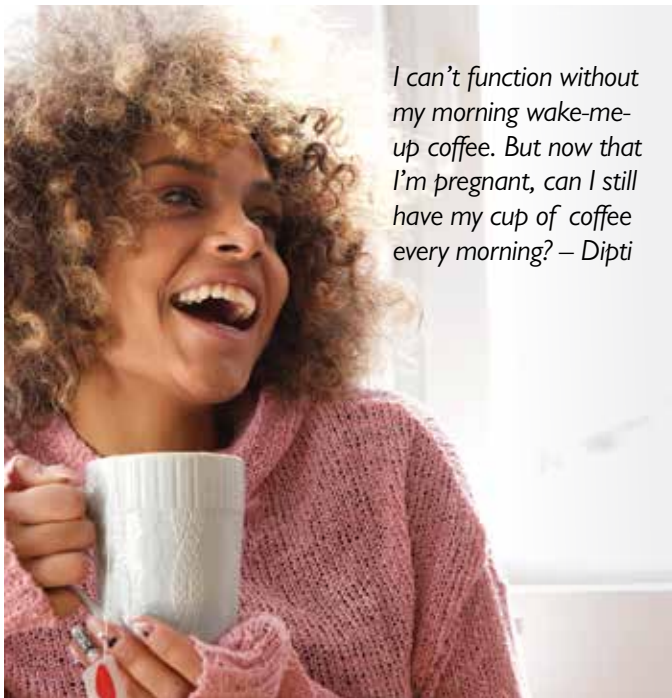
- **Prescription medicine.** Always talk to a doctor before you start taking – or stop taking – any medicines during your pregnancy. If you take any kind of medicine for a mental health issue and are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, tell your doctor. Don't stop taking it unless your doctor tells you to. Some medicines may cause problems for a growing baby, but stopping your medicine may make things worse. Your doctor can make a treatment plan that is best for you and your baby.

- **Talk therapy.** Talking one-on-one with a therapist can be a great way to manage stress, deal with depression, and ease anxiety during pregnancy. Finding a support group where you can share your concerns with other mothers who know what you're going through also can help. Talking with a social worker or counselor can help you deal with money issues, worries over raising a child, or other stresses in your life.
- **Other approaches.** Many women find comfort in activities like yoga, exercise, and meditation. If you're feeling stressed or overwhelmed, talking to a friend, family member, or faith leader can help you feel better.

Many moms feel anxious or depressed at some point in their pregnancy, and some may even need treatment for it. But a mental health problem doesn't have to be a problem for you or your baby. Get the help you need to feel better, and you'll be doing the best thing for you both.

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# Can I still drink coffee now that I'm pregnant?



*I can't function without my morning wake-me-up coffee. But now that I'm pregnant, can I still have my cup of coffee every morning? – Dipti*

Check with your doctor about caffeine intake during your pregnancy. One cup of coffee is usually OK, but it's best to not have more than that. It's hard to know exactly how much caffeine is in a cup of coffee, since it depends on factors like the brand of coffee and the size of the cup.

Studies indicate that caffeine consumption of more than 150–200 milligrams a day (about 1–2 cups of coffee) may put a pregnancy at higher risk. High caffeine consumption has been linked to an increased risk of having a low birth-weight baby or miscarriage.

If you're having a hard time cutting back on coffee cold turkey, here's how you can start:

- Cut your consumption down to one or two cups a day.
- Gradually reduce the amount by combining decaffeinated coffee with regular coffee.
- Eventually cut out the regular coffee altogether.

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## What are the risks of smoking during pregnancy?

*I'm pregnant with my first child. But I'm worried because I've been a smoker since college and am afraid I won't be able to quit. How could smoking affect the pregnancy? – Evangeline*

You wouldn't light a cigarette, put it in your baby's mouth, and encourage your little one to puff away. As ridiculous as that sounds, pregnant women who continue to smoke are allowing their fetus to smoke too. The smoking mother passes nicotine, carbon monoxide, and other chemicals to her growing baby.

If a pregnant woman smokes, it could cause:

- Miscarriage or stillbirth
- Premature birth
- Low birth weight
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Asthma and other respiratory problems

As hard as quitting can be, it's vital to stop smoking as soon as possible. Talk to your doctor about options for quitting. Not only will you be keeping your unborn baby healthier, you'll also be well on your way to being healthier yourself!

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Call our Nurse Help Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **1-800-686-3831** to speak with a registered nurse. For help picking a doctor, midwife, or OB/GYN, call Member Services at **1-866-959-2555 (STAR)**.

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