



StarBabies

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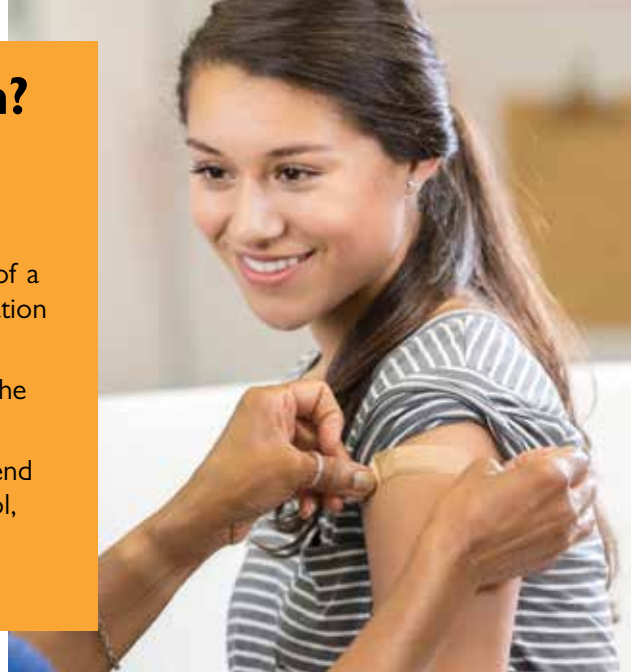
Do you have a Postpartum Plan?

A postpartum plan can help parents reduce stress and ease the transition period by identifying resources before they're needed.

Key aspects include:

- **Rest.** Finding help during the day and night following the birth of a baby is important. Prepare a list of names and contact information of people available to help you during these times.
- **Nutrition.** Plan to have meals prepared and/or delivered for the first weeks after the baby arrives.
- **Support for older siblings.** Find people who will be able to spend quality time with older children, as well as drive them to school, daycare, and activities.

Visit: texaschildrenshealthplan.org/starbabies/postpartum



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Week 33

Your baby's development

In these last few weeks before delivery, the billions of developed neurons in your baby's brain are helping him or her to learn about the in-utero environment — your baby can listen, feel, and even see somewhat. Your baby's eyes can detect light and the pupils can constrict and dilate in response to it.

Like a newborn, your baby sleeps much of the time and even has rapid eye movement (REM) sleep, the sleep stage during which our most vivid dreams happen!

Your baby's lungs are almost completely matured. Fat will continue to build on your baby's body for protection and warmth. Babies gain a good deal of their weight in the final few weeks before birth.

Your body

With labor and delivery only 2 months away, you may be considering how you'll cope with pain during childbirth. Commonly used ways to help manage pain include breathing techniques such as those taught in Lamaze classes; pain-relief medicines given through injection; and epidurals, where doctors can give an anesthetic through a soft, thin catheter placed in the lower back.

Whatever your choice, the more you know, the better informed your decision will be. You don't have to decide yet, but discuss your choices with your health care provider soon.

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Is it a cold or the flu?

It's the time of the year for colds and flu. But do you know the difference? Here are some ways to tell.

COLD

Slow onset of symptoms:

- No or mild fever
- Mild tiredness
- Normal appetite
- Muscles are not achy
- No chills
- No headache

How to tell the difference
between a cold and the flu.

FLU

Sudden onset of symptoms:

- High fever
- Severe tiredness
- Lower than normal appetite
- Muscles are achy
- Chills
- Headache

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**.

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 and click "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, or we can offer a 3-way call with you and the provider.

Arm yourself against the flu!

Flu season is here. You can help stop the spread of the flu by getting the flu shot. It's especially important for women who are pregnant to get the flu vaccine because you are at a higher risk for problems from the flu. Not only is it safe for pregnant women to get the flu shot, it could save you or your baby's life.

Don't wait. Protect yourself and your family. You can get the flu shot at your doctor's office.



Sleeping during pregnancy

Expectant parents know that it'll be harder to get a good night's sleep after their little one arrives. But who could have guessed that catching enough ZZZs during pregnancy could be so difficult?

Actually, you may sleep more than usual during the first trimester of your pregnancy. It's normal to feel tired as your body works to protect and nurture the developing baby. The placenta (the organ that nourishes the fetus until birth) is just forming, your body is making more blood, and your heart is pumping faster.

It's usually later in pregnancy that most women have trouble getting enough deep, uninterrupted sleep.

Why sleeping can be difficult

The first and most pressing reason behind sleep problems during pregnancy is the increasing size of the fetus, which can make it hard to find a comfortable sleeping position. If you've always been a back or stomach sleeper, you might have trouble getting used to sleeping on your side (as doctors recommend). Also, shifting around in bed becomes more difficult as the pregnancy progresses and you get bigger.

Other common physical symptoms may interfere with sleep as well:

- **The frequent urge to pee:** Your kidneys are working harder to filter the increased volume of blood moving through your body, and this filtering process creates more urine. And, as your baby grows and the uterus gets bigger, the pressure on your bladder increases. This means more trips to the bathroom, day and night. The number of nighttime trips may be greater if your baby is particularly active at night.
- **Increased heart rate:** Your heart rate increases to pump more blood, and as more of your blood supply goes to the uterus, your heart works harder to send sufficient blood to the rest of your body.

- **Shortness of breath:** The increase of pregnancy hormones will cause you to breathe in more deeply. You might feel like you're working harder to get air. Later on, breathing can feel more difficult as your enlarging uterus takes up more space, resulting in pressure against your diaphragm (the muscle just below your lungs).
- **Leg cramps and backaches:** The extra weight you're carrying can contribute to pains in your legs or back. During pregnancy, the body also makes a hormone called relaxin, which helps prepare it for childbirth. One of the effects of relaxin is the loosening of ligaments throughout the body, making pregnant women less stable and more prone to injury, especially in their backs.
- **Heartburn and constipation:** Many pregnant women have heartburn, which is when the stomach contents reflux back up into the esophagus. During pregnancy, the entire digestive system slows down and food stays in the stomach and intestines longer, which may cause heartburn or constipation. These can both get worse later on in the pregnancy when the growing uterus presses on the stomach or the large intestine.

Your sleep problems might have other causes as well. Many pregnant women report that their dreams become more vivid than usual, and some even have nightmares.

Stress can interfere with sleep, too. Maybe you're worried about your baby's health, anxious about your abilities as a parent, or feeling nervous about the delivery itself. All of these feelings are normal, but they might keep you (and your partner) up at night.



Finding a good sleeping position

Early in your pregnancy, try to get into the habit of sleeping on your side. Lying on your side with your knees bent is likely to be the most comfortable position as your pregnancy progresses. It also makes your heart's job easier because it keeps the baby's weight from applying pressure to the large vein (called the inferior vena cava) that carries blood back to the heart from your feet and legs.

Some doctors specifically recommend that pregnant women sleep on the left side. Because your liver is on the right side of your abdomen, lying on your left side helps keep the uterus off that large organ. Sleeping on the left side also improves circulation to the heart and allows for the best blood flow to the fetus, uterus, and kidneys. Ask your doctor what he or she recommends.

But don't drive yourself crazy worrying that you might roll over onto your back during the night. Shifting positions is a natural part of sleeping that you can't control. Most likely, during the third trimester of your pregnancy, your body won't shift into the back-sleeping position anyway because it will be too uncomfortable.

If you do shift onto your back, the discomfort will probably wake you up. Talk to your doctor, who may suggest that you use a pillow to keep yourself propped up on one side.

Try experimenting with pillows to discover a comfortable sleeping position. Some women find that it helps to place a pillow under their abdomen or between their legs. Also, using a bunched-up pillow or rolled-up blanket at the small of your back may help to relieve some pressure. In fact, you'll see many "pregnancy pillows" on the market. If you're thinking about buying one, talk with your doctor first about which might work for you.

Tips for sleeping success

Although they might seem appealing when you're feeling desperate to get some ZZZs, remember that over-the-counter sleep aids, including herbal remedies, are not recommended for pregnant women.



Instead, these tips may safely improve your chances of getting a good night's sleep:

- Cut out caffeinated drinks like soda, coffee, and tea from your diet as much as possible. Restrict any intake of them to the morning or early afternoon.
- Avoid drinking a lot of fluids or eating a full meal within a few hours of going to bed. (But make sure that you also get plenty of nutrients and liquids throughout the day.) Some women find it helpful to eat more at breakfast and lunch and then have a smaller dinner. If nausea is keeping you up, try eating a few crackers before you go to bed.
- Get into a routine of going to bed and waking up at the same time each day.
- Avoid rigorous exercise right before you go to bed. Instead, do something relaxing, like reading a book or having a warm, caffeine-free drink, such as milk with honey or a cup of herbal tea.
- If a leg cramp awakens you, it may help to press your feet hard against the wall or to stand on the leg. Some women find that stretching their calf muscles before bed helps. Also, make sure that you're getting enough calcium and magnesium in your diet, which can help reduce leg cramps. But don't take any supplements without checking with your doctor.
- Take a yoga class or learn other relaxation techniques to help you unwind after a busy day. (Be sure to discuss any new activity or fitness regimen with your doctor first.)
- If fear and anxiety are keeping you awake, consider enrolling in a childbirth class or parenting class. More knowledge and the company of other pregnant women may help to ease the fears that are keeping you awake at night.

When you can't sleep

Of course, there are bound to be times when you just can't sleep. Instead of tossing and turning, worrying that you're not asleep, and counting the hours until your alarm clock will go off, get up and do something: read a book, listen to music, watch TV, catch up on letters or email, or pursue some other activity you enjoy. Eventually, you'll probably feel tired enough to get back to sleep.

And if possible, take short naps (30 to 60 minutes) during the day to make up for lost sleep. It won't be long before your baby will be setting the sleep rules in your house, so you might as well get used to sleeping in spurts!

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Sweet Potato Oven Fries

Ingredients:

- 4 medium sweet potatoes
(each about 5 inches long and 3 inches wide)
- 4 tsp. dried thyme
- 4 tbsp. canola oil

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 450°F (230°C).
2. Peel the sweet potatoes and cut them into ½-inch strips.
3. In a large bowl, toss the potato strips with canola oil and dried thyme.
4. Place the coated potato strips in a single layer on a baking sheet.
5. Bake for 40 minutes, or until golden brown. Turn potatoes once or twice during cooking to cook evenly.

Serves: 4

Nutritional analysis (per serving: about ½ cup of fries):

- 160 calories
- 4g fiber
- 2g protein
- 0mg cholesterol
- 5g fat
- 70mg sodium
- 0g sat. fat
- 5g sugars
- 27g carbohydrate

This recipe has important nutrients for mom and baby, including:

Vitamin A

Vitamin A helps develop a baby's heart, eyes, and immune system. Good sources of vitamin A include milk, orange fruits and vegetables (such as cantaloupe, carrots, and sweet potatoes), and dark leafy greens. Prenatal vitamins should not contain more than 1,500 micrograms (5,000 IU) of vitamin A and pregnant women should not take vitamin A supplements. Both too little and too much vitamin A can harm a developing fetus.

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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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