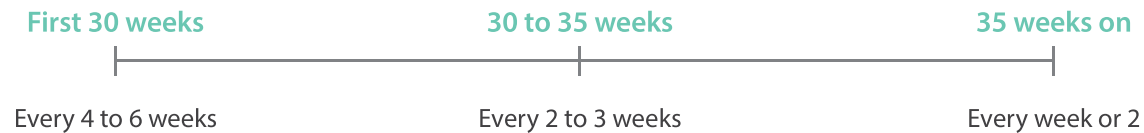


## Health Care During Pregnancy

Working with your health care provider is key to a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

### How Often Should You See Your Health Care Provider?



You will be offered more visits if you:

- are underweight or overweight
- had problems with a previous pregnancy
- have diabetes or high blood pressure
- are over age 40
- are carrying more than 1 baby
- have had a caesarean or other surgery on your uterus
- drink, smoke or use drugs
- are depressed or dealing with other issues, including violence in the home



#### DID YOU KNOW?

You can choose to visit your health care provider on your own or you can bring someone along. Do what makes you most comfortable.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

To keep your mouth healthy, visit the dentist regularly for checkups and cleanings. This can help prevent gum problems during pregnancy and reduce the chance of having a baby who is born too early or too small. Fixing cavities also helps prevent spreading tooth decay to your baby after they are born.



#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Read through the list of medical emergencies (see [Pregnancy Risk Factors](#)) and ensure your partner visits their health care provider if necessary.

### What Happens at a Visit to Your Health Care Provider?

Each time you visit your health care provider, they'll likely:

- check your blood pressure
- check your baby's heart rate
- measure your belly to check the baby's growth

Your early pregnancy visits are usually the longest. Your health care provider will take a physical history and do a complete checkup, which may include:

- a pregnancy test
- questions about your lifestyle, including diet, exercise, smoking, drinking and drug use
- information about prenatal supplements
- an abdominal exam
- a pelvic exam with Pap test or vaginal swab
- cervix/HPV self screening
- height and weight measurements
- blood tests to screen for sexually transmitted and blood borne infections, confirm your blood type and check your iron levels
- genetic screening tests
- a urine test



#### BE AWARE

Health Canada warns that gentian violet (also known as crystal violet) can increase the risk of cancer. If you're pregnant, don't use it to treat any condition.

**At your later pregnancy visits**, your health care provider may suggest tests to identify any issues with you or your baby that may need treatment. These tests may include:

- an ultrasound (19 to 22 weeks) to check the location of your placenta and the development of your baby
- screening (24 to 28 weeks) to check for gestational diabetes
- a swab (35 to 37 weeks) to screen for Group B Streptococcus infection
- genetic screening tests

Your health care provider will also ask about your emotional well-being and, if you have Rh-negative blood, give you an Rh-immune globulin shot at 28 to 29 weeks.



### TRY THIS

Write down some basic information and bring it along to your first appointment:

- the dates of your last period and Pap test
- your blood type and the other biological parent(s)
- medications (including herbal ones) you take
- past pregnancies
- illnesses you've had and any that run in your family or the other biological parent(s)' family
- plans and questions about feeding your baby
- any other questions

### What is prenatal genetic screening?

Optional blood tests that can tell you the chance of your baby having conditions like Down syndrome or spina bifida. This screening isn't perfect and doesn't provide a diagnosis. If you get a positive result, you may choose to have more specific tests. See [Pregnancy Risk Factors](#) to learn more.

### What are the Pregnancy Passport and the Indigenous Pregnancy Passport?

Free pamphlets you can use to keep track of your pregnancy care. The Indigenous Pregnancy Passport also includes traditional beliefs and values. Both are available online at [perinatalservicesbc.ca](http://perinatalservicesbc.ca) or through your health care provider.

## Recommended Vaccines

Getting vaccinated in pregnancy is a safe and effective way to protect you and your baby from harmful diseases. Visit: [immunizebc.ca/adults/pregnancy](http://immunizebc.ca/adults/pregnancy) for more information and talk with a public health nurse or your health care provider about vaccines you may be eligible for.



### DID YOU KNOW?

Young babies can get seriously ill from influenza. By getting the flu shot during pregnancy, you'll pass protective antibodies along to your baby and help protect them until they're 6 months old and can get the vaccine themselves.

## Influenza vaccine (flu shot)

Influenza (flu) is more serious when you're pregnant. It can harm you and your baby and lead to severe illness and complications, including premature labour and delivery. Get a flu shot and encourage family and friends you see regularly to do the same. And if you have flu symptoms (fever, cough, headache, achiness, fatigue), contact your health care provider or HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 or [healthlinkbc.ca](http://healthlinkbc.ca).

## Pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine

Pertussis is a serious infection of the airways that can cause pneumonia (lung infection), seizures, brain damage and even death. The younger a baby is when they get pertussis, the more likely they'll need to be treated in a hospital. But babies can't be vaccinated against pertussis until they're 2 months old. By getting vaccinated at some point during your pregnancy – ideally between 27 and 32 weeks – you'll pass protective antibodies on to your baby, providing them with some short-term, early protection against the infection. Visit [immunizebc.ca/pregnancy](http://immunizebc.ca/pregnancy) for more information.

## COVID-19

Pregnant individuals are at increased risk of serious illness and complications from a COVID-19 infection. COVID-19 vaccines can be given safely at any time while trying to conceive, during pregnancy or while breastfeeding or chestfeeding. To learn more visit: [bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID-19\\_vaccine/COVID19\\_Vaccine\\_Perinatal.pdf](http://bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID-19_vaccine/COVID19_Vaccine_Perinatal.pdf)