

1. Should I continue taking Folic Acid after the birth of the baby?

Yes, the above supplements need to be continued after delivery during lactation. Iron & Folic Acid helps in improving the haemoglobin [to compensate the blood loss happened in delivery]. Calcium is secreted in breast milk. So calcium supplementation to the mother protects bone. Ideally calcium is mandatory during exclusive breast feeding [first 6 months after delivery] and good to continue after that as well, till mother stops breast feeding

2. What diet should I follow during breast feeding?

Continue with your pregnancy efforts to have a balanced and healthy diet when you are breastfeeding. Your baby will get his nutrition from your breastmilk, so it's important to eat well. A balanced diet includes:

Starchy foods, such as rice, bread, potato (aloo), whole-wheat roti's, oats, semolina (suji) and pasta. Choose wholegrain or multi-grain varieties of cereal-based starchy foods for added nutrients and fibre. Dairy products such as a glass of milk, curd or yoghurt. *(Talk to your doctor about what to eat if you are lactose intolerant.)* Protein, such as lentils, pulses, eggs, fish and lean meat. Plenty of fruit and vegetables.

3. What to do in case of Cold for a new born?

A cold for a new born is a very delicate matter to handle. It is best advised to take the child to the paediatrician at the earliest possible time.

4. How important are vaccinations?

Vaccine (or immunization) is a way to build your body's natural immunity to a disease before you get sick. This keeps you from getting and spreading the disease. Through vaccination, a weakened form of the disease germ is injected into your body.

Your body builds a defence system to fight foreign germs that could make you sick or hurt you. It's called your immune system. To build up your immune system, your body must be exposed to different germs. When your body is exposed to a germ for the first time, it produces antibodies to fight it. But that takes time and you usually get sick before the antibodies have built up. But once you have antibodies, they stay in your body. So, the next time you're exposed to that germ, the antibodies will attack it, and you won't get sick.

5. I had a C-Section and was unable to breastfeed? Can I give formula to my new born?

Ideally breastfeeding is initiated at the earliest after delivery. In case of C Section, there may be delay for the surgery to get completed. But as soon as patient shifted from the operation theatre to recovery room, breast feeding is initiated in the recovery room itself.

Early initiation of breast feeding helps in successful establishment of lactation. The initial secretion from breast after delivery is called colostrum. It is a watery secretion – rich in antibodies. Colostrum helps to build up baby's immune system immediately after delivery [Formula feeds should be started after discussing with paediatrician – in case of lactation failure [absence of milk secretion]

6. How can I tell if the symptoms I am having are actual contractions or fake? When should I call a doctor?

Before "true" labor begins, you might have "false" labor pains. The difference in between this is

- Timing of contractions:
False labor: contractions are often irregular and do not get closer together.
True labor: contractions come at regular intervals and get closer together as time goes on. (Contractions last about 30 to 70 seconds.).
- Change with movement:
False labor: contractions might stop when you walk or rest, or might even stop when you change position.
True labor: contractions continue, despite moving or changing positions.

True labor pains continue – despite moving or changing positions and there may be associated discharge [blood stained] vaginally

7. What is the normal amount of weight to gain during pregnancy?

If you are in the healthy weight range before becoming pregnant (BMI 18.5-24.9), ideally you should gain between **11.5 kg** and 16 kg: 1 to 1.5 kg in the first three months then 1.5 to 2 kg each month until you give birth.

If your weight range is in the obese category [BMI > 25] or in the underweight category [BMI <18.5], then you need to consult doctor regarding diet plan during pregnancy

8. What remedies do you recommend to ease morning sickness?

Here are some remedies to minimise morning sickness.

- **Get plenty of rest:** It is important to get a good night's sleep. Go to bed early and wake up early, so you can take time to get out of bed.
- **Eat with care:** Fatty, spicy foods and caffeine increase the chance of triggering the release of stomach acid. Bland foods may be less aggravating. Small portion sizes can help reduce the chance of vomiting but keep something in the stomach. Having an empty stomach can worsen the feelings of nausea. Having fruits like bananas or any citrus fruit will help reduce morning sickness.
- **Keep physically and mentally active:** Being physically active has been found to improve symptoms in women who experience nausea during pregnancy.
- Ensure good fluid intake
- Ginger and peppermint teas
- Vitamins and supplements: Supplements should only be used under a doctor's supervision. If you are taking vitamins, it may be best to take them before bed and with a snack.
- Avoid triggers: Morning sickness is linked to an increased sensitivity to smell.
- Help for acid reflux: antacid medication to take before going to bed to reduce stomach acid levels, and the subsequent morning vomiting.

9. What do you recommend about exercise and specific foods should I eat in each trimester?

Eating a balanced diet is best for a good pregnancy and equal importance should be given to exercise. We would recommend that this is best addressed to you by your doctor suiting your bodily needs.

10. Is it safe to have sex during the entire pregnancy?

Sexual activity won't affect your baby as long as you don't have any complications in pregnancy

In certain conditions – abstinence is advised during pregnancy – hence it would be best for you to discuss this with your consulting obstetrician

Yes it is safe provided your partner and you are comfortable. Your developing baby is protected by the amniotic fluid in your uterus, as well as by the strong muscles of the uterus itself. Sexual activity won't affect your baby, as long as you don't have complications such as preterm labor or placenta problem. However it would be best for you to discuss this with your consulting gynaecologist.

11. What are the scans done during pregnancy and their importance?

- First scan of pregnancy usually around 6 to 7 weeks to check for fetal viability
- Second scan done @ 12-13 weeks of pregnancy – called NT Scan

NT Scan is done to rule out any chromosomal abnormalities in the fetus [eg. Down's syndrome]

Along with the NT Scan – a blood test named first trimester screening / double marker test will be done.

NT Scan + FTS blood test are screening tests for chromosomal abnormalities.

- Third scan – Anomaly scan / Target Scan

Done around 20-22 weeks. This is the most important scan of pregnancy. Fetus is screened from head to toe for any developmental abnormalities [defects in brain, heart, limbs]

- Fourth scan – Growth scan – done in third trimester [20 – 40 weeks] to assess the growth of fetus [total weight] liquor volume [fluid surrounding the fetus]

12. After delivery, my tummy size has not reduced to pre-pregnancy state, does wearing belt or tying cloth around tummy help to reduce its size?

Tummy appearing enlarged after delivery is due to poor muscle tone of abdominal muscles. These are the muscles which had stretched to accommodate your enlarging womb with fetus during pregnancy.

No, wearing belt or cloth tie around tummy does not help to reduce tummy size.

Post natal exercises should be initiated to improve muscle tone thereby flabby appearance of tummy is rectified.

13. How can I prevent getting pregnant during breastfeeding?

Usually ovulation suppression and absence of periods [menstruation] occur during exclusive breastfeeding [first 6 months after delivery] but this is not true in all women, some women ovulate [egg release] happens during lactation as well.

Hence, it is good to follow contraception methods to prevent pregnancy

Non-hormonal methods are ideal like intrauterine device [copper T] during breastfeeding. Some hormonal contraceptives affect the breast milk secretion. Hence contraceptive options need to be discussed with your doctor to select the one which suits you.