

Crucial Questions Every Pregnant Woman Should Ask Her OB-GYN

M Judy Koutsky



I remember the joy — and anxiety — of my first pregnancy. I was afraid to do anything without consulting my doctor, several pregnancy books, and/or Dr. Google (note: just don't do this). Then I went to the source: my mom, who had six kids. I learned that she ate, drank, and behaved the same way when she was pregnant as she did when she wasn't pregnant! But here's the thing: While that was certainly the norm back then, we know now that certain behaviors (like drinking alcohol and smoking) and foods (like raw eggs) can cause problems for both you and your baby. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics' [latest recommendations](#) say that women should not drink any alcohol at all while pregnant. So, it's important to have an open dialogue with your doctor as soon as you become pregnant. Here, a few things to make sure you ask your ob-gyn, no matter what:

1. "Should I get genetic testing?"

Some women, even-low risk women, want to undergo testing to make sure they have all the information at hand; other women, especially those who might not change the outcome of the pregnancy regardless of the test results, wish to skip the testing. It's important to know where you, and your ob-gyn, stand on the issue. Yvonne Bohn, MD, a California-based ob-gyn, and co-author of the book [Mommy Doc's Ultimate Guide to Pregnancy and Birth](#), for example, believes that all

women should get genetic testing. “Even though the mother may be healthy and not exhibit any symptoms, she can carry a gene for a disease and if her husband carries the same gene the baby has a 25 percent chance of becoming effected.” However, she notes, the extent of genetic testing depends on the patient’s ethnicity and history of genetic birth defects in the family. Dr. Bohn says that she recommends that all of her patients be screened to see if they are carriers for cystic fibrosis, a debilitating lung disease because the asymptomatic carrier rate is quite high; however, screenings for rarer diseases are only recommended if there’s a family history.

2. “What type of exercise should I be doing?”

[Studies](#) show that there are many [benefits to exercising during pregnancy](#), including getting better sleep, eliminating back pain, increasing stamina (which you’ll need for labor), and keeping a strong, positive attitude. Talk to your doctor about your current activity level before you commit to a [pregnancy workout plan](#). I exercised when I was pregnant with both of my kids and found it to be a wonderful way to beat stress (yeah, endorphins!) — plus, everyone at the gym was slightly in awe of my pregnant state, so I never had to wait for machines or weights! Of course, exercise is not right for everyone: If you have a [high-risk pregnancy](#) (including high-blood pressure, heart disease, or vaginal bleeding), your doctor may advise against it.

3. “Can I have sex?”

Some women worry that having sex while they’re pregnant might hurt the baby, but it’s perfectly safe for most pregnant women to have intercourse up until they deliver, says Dr. Bohn. “Conditions for which I recommend abstinence include [placenta previa](#) and [preterm labor](#),” she says. Otherwise, you’re good to go.

4. “Can I still drink coffee?”

Your doc will probably recommend that you limit your overall [caffeine intake](#) to no more than 200 mg daily, because caffeine can cross the placenta and affect your baby’s heart rate. (Some [studies](#) have even linked too much caffeine with miscarriage.) And yes, caffeine can be found in that chocolate brownie you’ve been craving, so it’s not just about your morning coffee.

5. “What foods should I avoid?”

Everyone has their own opinion on what you can — and can’t consume — during pregnancy, so ask your doc for her thoughts. Currently, the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) recommends avoiding the following:

- Raw and under-cooked eggs, meats, and seafood (including sushi)
- Unpasteurized cheese and milk
- Hot dogs, lunch meats, cold cuts, and pate

These items might contain a type of bacteria that can lead to a foodborne illness called [Listeria](#). Pregnant women are 13 times more likely to get Listeria and if left untreated it can lead to some pretty severe pregnancy complications, including miscarriage. While I know I was craving some serious brie when I was pregnant, I ultimately didn’t think it was worth the risk. A hunk of cheddar wasn’t a bad substitute.

6. “Do I need to take extra iron and folic acid?”

Your prenatal vitamin will contain both iron and folic acid — and that should be enough, unless you have certain medical conditions (like seizure disorder) or you’ve had a baby with a neural tube defect or a cleft palate, says Dr. Bohn. So, it’s important to talk to your doctor before you pop any additional supplements. There is such a thing as getting too much of a good thing, even when it comes to vitamins and nutrients.

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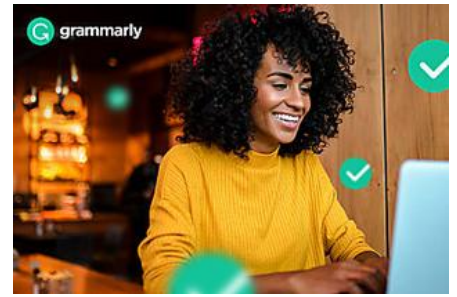
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