



# PREGNANCY FACTS

The following facts have been adapted from the Flourish Antenatal Classes. See below for sign up details for Antenatal Classes.

For answers to questions on being pregnant during COVID-19 please visit [Messages for Mothers](#)

## THE TRIMESTERS EXPLAINED:

- **First trimester** is the period of pregnancy that is between 1 and 12 weeks (1-3 months):
  - Baby's brain is already starting to form at this early stage of pregnancy and helps baby to move, although mom won't feel this movement yet
  - At 8 weeks baby's heart begins to beat and their face starts to develop features
  - At 12 weeks you can see if it is a boy or girl
- **Second trimester** is the period of pregnancy that is between 13 and 28 weeks (4-7 months):
  - Baby's brain development helps baby to start breathing, sucking, and swallowing in the womb
  - At 16 weeks baby starts to hear things inside mom's body
  - At 20 weeks moms might feel baby moving, and baby can hear noises from outside mom's body
- **Third trimester** is the period of pregnancy that is between 29 and 40 weeks (8-10 months):
  - Baby's brain grows very quickly at this stage and triples in weight
  - At 32 weeks baby starts to store very important minerals such as iron and calcium to help strengthen his/her bones



## PREGNANCY SUPPLEMENTS:

- **Iron:** helps to prevent anaemia – a lack of red blood cells that can leave mom feeling exhausted with very low energy levels, and put her at risk of having a baby with a low birth weight
- **Folate/folic acid:** is important for the development of baby's brain and spine. Not taking folate can put baby at risk of developing spina bifida, a physical disability where baby's spine does not develop properly
- **Calcium:** helps protect mom from pre-eclampsia, which is a complication of high blood pressure. If untreated pre-eclampsia puts mom's life at risk and increases the risk of baby being born prematurely and/or with a low birth weight
- **IMPORTANT TO NOTE: Take ARVs as prescribed by a health care provider:** If mom is HIV positive and takes her ARVs every day, she will protect her baby from being infected with HIV too

## WHAT NOT TO DO DURING PREGNANCY:

- **Do not drink alcohol:** this can result in the baby being born with foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) which causes learning disabilities and behavioural problems
- **Do not smoke cigarettes:** as this interferes with mom and baby's absorption of essential nutrients and may lead to a low birth weight

## AT EACH ANTENATAL VISIT MOM SHOULD RECEIVE THE FOLLOWING CARE:

- A history is taken for problems or danger signs
- Blood pressure is measured
- The size of the uterus is measured
- Urine is tested for sugar and protein
- Mom is checked if she is at low risk of problems or if she needs referral to a higher level of care
- Mom is given advice, support, and information about her pregnancy, what to expect during labour, the importance of breastfeeding and immunisation of her baby
- HIV positive moms are encouraged to continue taking ARVs

## NUTRITION FACTS:

- **Eggs** are a very important source of protein, micronutrients, and minerals essential for pregnant women and children over the age of 6 months. Eggs are rich in vitamin E, A (found in egg yolk) and B12, folate, iron, and zinc
- Make starchy foods part of most meals, e.g. sweet potato, potato, brown rice, mielie meal
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit every day. Examples of fruit and vegetables rich in Vitamin A, which is important for protecting baby's lung development, include carrots, sweet potato, pumpkin, spinach and tomato
- Examples of iron-rich foods include spinach, liver, kidney and beans
- Examples of calcium-rich foods include dairy, e.g. full cream milk, maas, full cream yogurt
- Eat dry beans, split peas, lentils, and soya regularly
- Have milk, maas or yoghurt every day
- Fish, chicken, lean meat, or eggs can be eaten every day
- Drink lots of clean, safe water
- Use fats sparingly. Choose vegetable oils, rather than hard fats
- Use sugar, and foods or drinks high in sugar, sparingly
- Use salt, and food high in salt, sparingly; this includes sauces, soup mix and seasoning

## LABOUR:

- No two labour and birthing experiences are the same, and every woman will experience this differently, even if she has given birth before
- The cervix is the entrance to the uterus. The cervix opens (or dilates) during labour, once it is 10cm open it is considered fully dilated and mom will feel the urge to start pushing
- There are 3 stages to labour:
  - Stage one** is regular, painful contractions as the cervix opens, this generally takes less than 12 hours
  - Stage two** is the birth, when the cervix has opened fully (10 cm) and mom starts to push until her baby is born, this generally takes less than 2 hours
  - Stage three** is the delivery of the placenta, after baby has been born, an injection is usually given to mom to speed this up

- There are 3 types of births:
  - Vaginal birth**, also called natural birth, is the most common type of birth with about 80% of babies are born this way
  - Caesarian section**, also called a C section, is an abdominal operation performed in hospital, but usually only when mom and / or baby face complications. In private healthcare, moms can request a Caesarian section, this is called an elective Caesarian
  - Assisted birth** is the use of instruments to assist in a vaginal delivery where the baby won't deliver naturally. This is usually done by a doctor in hospital
- **The most common signs of labour are:**
  - Dull, lower back pain, pains similar to period pains, soft or watery stools
- **Early signs of labour are:**
  - Thick, bloody vaginal discharge with mucus
  - Continuous back pain that moves around to the front
  - Abdominal contractions
- **Late signs:**
  - Water "breaks"
  - Longer and more frequent contractions
  - Heavy feeling in the pelvic area
- **What to do when labour starts:**
  - Eat only light foods. Drink fluids (e.g. water)
  - Breathe deeply and try to relax
  - Walk slowly around your house
  - On your watch or clock, measure the time between the pains (contractions)
  - When the pains are ten minutes apart, or if your water breaks, it is time to go to the MOU or hospital
- Skin-to-skin care is the act of placing an unclothed or nappy-only newborn baby chest-to-chest with mom immediately after delivery. Immediate skin-to-skin care for a minimum of one hour after birth is one of the most effective methods for promoting exclusive breastfeeding
- Every baby must have a Road to Health Book, which is given to mom after birth, before leaving the hospital
- There are two different Road to Health Books; one for boys and one for girls
- The Road to Health Book must be taken with to all baby's clinic visits so that the healthcare professional can record and track the following development and growth:
  - Height and weight for age
  - Head circumference
  - Mid-upper arm circumference
- Baby's immunisations are also recorded in the Road to Health Book
- After the birth, baby should be seen at home or at the clinic on days 1, 3, 7 and 14. These are called postnatal visits and are important so that both baby and mom can receive the proper care they need

## BREASTFEEDING FACTS:

- Breastfeeding can improve a child's brain development
- Breastfeeding moms are entitled to two 30-minute breaks at work to breastfeed or express breast milk until their child is six months old
- Alcohol is absorbed into breastmilk and enters baby's blood stream by the baby breastfeeding. Alcohol affects baby's brain development
- The first breast milk produced by mom after birth is called the colostrum and is very good for baby as it is full of antibodies, and is important in protecting newborn's from bacteria and viruses. It is therefore very important that newborns breastfeed as soon as possible after they are born
- Breastmilk supply is stimulated by baby sucking. The more baby sucks and feeds, the more breast milk is produced
- Women are not protected from pregnancy while breastfeeding – mom must consider family planning methods whilst breastfeeding
- Moms should breastfeed baby whenever s/he is hungry. This is called feeding on demand
- Applying breastmilk to the affected area can help soothe and heal cracked nipples
- **Engorged breasts** (painful, swollen and hard breasts) are usually a sign of blocked breastmilk ducts. The best way to unblock the ducts is to express your breast milk or to feed your baby
- **Mastitis** is an infection which presents as a swollen, painful red area of one breast. Moms will feel ill and may have a high temperature and must seek medical care urgently
- **Antibodies** are part of the immune system that fights infections. The antibodies in breastmilk protect baby from getting sick a lot. Formula fed babies tend to have more episodes of diarrhoea than breastfed babies
- Breastfeeding while pregnant will do no harm to the baby in your womb. It does not take anything away from the baby in the womb

Sikunye is in partnership with Flourish and would love to see moms feeling confident about and supported in their pregnancy. We encourage you to join an antenatal class so you can feel empowered with knowledge and support to enjoy your pregnancy, and so that you and baby Flourish. Flourish classes cost R200 for 10 sessions, however sponsorship is available. If you are interested in joining a virtual Flourish class please sign up by dialling **\*134\*48333\*03#** on your phone, **select 1 “sign up as a new flourish mom”** and **follow the steps**. Enter the licence host number **0122** whilst you are signing up. This will then be a recruitment via Sikunye.

Email [flourish@growgreat.co.za](mailto:flourish@growgreat.co.za) if you have any other questions or visit the [Flourish Network website](#)

For more information / resources like this please visit our website: [www.sikunye.org.za](http://www.sikunye.org.za)

