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Pregnancy is a time of change. You will change physically and emotionally, and the day-to-day life of your family will also change. Research shows that the more you are cared for during pregnancy, the better you will care for your newborn. Don't hesitate to seek help and accept it when it is offered.

Most of the things you do affect the baby inside you—so eat healthy food, stay active and get plenty of rest. Pregnancy is also a great time to find ways to reduce the stress in your life. If you smoke, drink or use drugs, stop and get help. The sooner you stop the better, but whenever you stop, it will help your baby. For your baby's sake, take good care of yourself and start getting regular checkups as soon as you think you are pregnant.



Sarah shares in the wonder of her mother's pregnancy.

Prenatal Care

Start seeing a doctor as soon as you know you are pregnant or want to become pregnant. You may be able to get free or low-cost prenatal care. Call your county Health Department, **HEALTHY BEGINNINGS** or **ALABAMA MEDICAID**.

Talk with your health care provider before you take any medications or supplements. Ask about folic acid. Taking folic acid before and during pregnancy can reduce your risk of having a baby with serious spinal problems.

Testing and treatment for HIV and STDs before or during pregnancy can also prevent problems for your baby. Call: **STD/HIV HOTLINE**.

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Talking to Other Parents

Childbirth classes are a great way to prepare for birth and share your experiences.



Suzanne Arms

Exercise and Relaxation

Stay active, but also take time to sit quietly. Exercise and rest can help you feel good throughout your pregnancy. Learn more at childbirth classes or from your doctor.

For Fathers

If you're an expecting father, try to keep the stress level low at home. Help out as much as you can. Go to prenatal visits and childbirth classes together. Make sure you can be reached in an emergency. For more information and resources for fathers, see page 45. Call:

☎ **DADS** or visit:
www.fatherhood.org.

Food and Nutrition

The Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program offers classes and counseling on nutrition and breastfeeding, both before and after the birth. WIC also provides healthy food. To see if you qualify, call your county Health Department or ☎ **HEALTHY BEGINNINGS**.

Things You Can Do

To Have a Healthy Baby

- For health care for low-income and middle-income pregnant women and their newborn children, call ☎ **ALABAMA MEDICAID** or ☎ **HEALTHY BEGINNINGS**.
- See if your children qualify for free or low-cost health insurance. Call your county Health Department or ☎ **ALL KIDS**.
- Take prenatal vitamins with folic acid, calcium and iron to help prevent problems. Try to take folic acid throughout your childbearing years or start at least 1 month before you become pregnant. Talk to your doctor or call: ☎ **MARCH OF DIMES**.
- Take time to rest every day. It's normal to be tired.
- Talk and sing to your baby. Even before birth, babies can hear and learn the sounds of words.
- Eat healthy foods and exercise regularly.
- Morning sickness? Eat small amounts as often as you can. Try dry crackers or toast when you wake up.
- Stay away from alcohol, tobacco and drugs. See page 65.
- Seek out friends and family to share the joy of your pregnancy.
- If you have a disability, see page 47. Call: ☎ **NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR PARENTS WITH DISABILITIES** or visit: www.lookingglass.org.

Problems

- If you start to bleed, get medical help right away.
- Can't stop drinking, smoking or using drugs? **Get help**. See page 65.
- Stressed? Feeling bad? Long periods of stress or depression may affect your baby. With help, you can feel better. See page 59.
- If there's violence at home, see page 63.

Time Off from Work

Some new parents can get up to 3 months of Family Medical Leave and have their jobs back afterward. Ask if your employer offers Family Medical Leave.

Where To Find Help

Free Phone Numbers

☎ ALABAMA MEDICAID	1-800-362-1504
☎ ALL KIDS	1-888-373-5437
☎ DADS	1-800-790-3237
☎ HEALTHY BEGINNINGS	1-800-654-1385
☎ MARCH OF DIMES	1-888-663-4637
☎ NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR PARENTS WITH DISABILITIES	1-800-644-2666
☎ STD/HIV HOTLINE	1-800-227-8922

Websites

www.fatherhood.org

www.lookingglass.org

See pages 82–86 for additional Spanish, TTY and website resources.

Notes

As your child grows, she will want to feed herself and choose her own food. One day she may eat a lot and the next day almost nothing. She may want to eat only one food. Other new behaviors may appear at mealtimes. Your child may become very picky or easily distracted.

How can you encourage her independence while helping her eat healthy foods? Be patient and offer healthy choices during meals and snacks. Let your child decide how much to eat. Over time, your child will learn to enjoy many new foods and develop good eating habits.

Snacks

Healthy snacks are an important part of a young child's diet. Young children need to eat often because they eat small amounts at each meal. Choose snacks like fresh or dried fruits, vegetables, unsweetened cereals, tortillas, crackers, bread, cheese or yogurt. These foods are nutritious and don't have added sugar.

How Much Food Does Your Child Need?

Toddlers and young children are not growing as fast as they were in their first year. They eat small amounts and they need to eat often.

Provide regular meals and snacks. If your child does not want to eat, don't force her. Call: 📞 **HEALTHY BEGINNINGS** or visit: www.nutrition.gov.

Wanting to Eat Only One Food?

It can be frustrating when a child wants to eat just one food all the time. Avoid battles over food. You can serve the favorite food as part of a balanced meal and set a good example by eating a balanced diet yourself. Over time, your child will begin to eat a greater variety of foods.



© Harry Cutting

Feeding Toddlers and Young Children



Human Issues Collaborative

Brad says, “I’m a big boy now. I can eat my cereal all by myself.”

Iron Is Important

Toddlers and young children often become anemic because they don’t get enough iron. Iron-rich foods need to be a part of their everyday diet. Foods that are high in iron include:

- peas and beans
- meat
- enriched breads and grains
- dry cereals with added iron
- leafy green vegetables

Worried About Your Child’s Nutrition?

If you think your child is eating too much or too little, do not put him on a special diet. Talk to your doctor or ask your doctor to refer you to a dietician. See page 69.

Things You Can Do

Kids Can Be Picky

- They may not like mixed foods like stews or casseroles.
- They may not want their foods to mix or touch on the plate.
- They may eat a food once, but not the next time it is served.
- They may need to try a food more than once before they like it.
- Introduce a new food with one that your child already likes.
- Give fun names to foods, like “little trees” for broccoli.
- Give kids finger foods so they can learn to feed themselves.

Mealtimes

Meals are a time for the family to get together and enjoy one another. Allow your child to stop eating when he is no longer hungry. Let him leave the table to do something else. Don’t feed toddlers and young children in front of the TV—it can make them anxious.

For Healthy Eating

- Limit high-sugar foods. They promote tooth decay. See page 55.
- Lower-fat foods are healthier for children over age 2. See page 69.
- Most fast foods are high in fat. When you eat out, ask for lower-fat choices such as fruits and vegetables and baked or grilled food.
- Set a good example. Kids will copy what and how you eat.
- Use fresh foods when you can. They are usually healthier.
- Avoid giving your child soda pop. They can make it harder for his body to get enough calcium. Give water, fruit juice or milk instead.
- If you or someone you know needs food, call your county Health Department or ☎ **HEALTHY BEGINNINGS**.

Prevent Choking

- Keep an eye on your child while he is eating. If he chokes he can’t make noise to get your attention.
- Cut your child’s food into small pieces. Remove bones from meat and seeds or pits from fruit.
- Don’t give young children whole grapes, round hot dog or carrot slices, meat chunks, popcorn, nuts, chewing gum or hard candy. These foods can cause choking because they can stick in your child’s throat.
- Make sure your child is seated when you feed him.
- Don’t let your child walk around with a bottle or a cup.
- Learn first aid for choking at your local hospital or Red Cross.

Where To Find Help

Free Phone Numbers

☎ **HEALTHY BEGINNINGS**

1-800-654-1385

Websites

www.nutrition.gov

See pages 82–86 for additional Spanish, TTY and website resources.