

High blood pressure and pregnancy

Women with high blood pressure can have a healthy baby. But if you have high blood pressure, there are some risks. The risk is higher that your baby will have low birth weight, early delivery or more serious complications. Even if you never had it before, there's a 70% chance you will develop high blood pressure when you're pregnant.

Here is what you can do to stay healthy:

Keep your blood pressure under control. Simple lifestyle changes can help. Exercise, limit salt, and stay away from alcohol and tobacco.

Keep your weight under control. You may be eating more when you're pregnant. But it's important to choose healthy foods and watch portion sizes. Most doctors recommend that you gain only 25-35 pounds. If you gain more, you may be at risk for pre-eclampsia.

Pre-eclampsia is a serious condition. It usually begins around the 20th week of pregnancy. It's caused by high blood pressure and kidney problems. Your doctor will check your weight, blood pressure and urine during each visit. If you develop pre-eclampsia, your doctor can take steps to avoid serious problems including seizures in the mother and premature delivery or stillbirth.

Be sure to go to all your prenatal visits with your doctor or health care professional. Prenatal visits will help you have a healthy baby. Your doctor can track your weight, blood pressure and watch for pre-eclampsia. And also give you tips for controlling your blood pressure before it becomes a problem. This is also a good time to ask questions.

Tell your doctor about any medicines, herbs, or over-the-counter drugs you are taking. Some medicines can be harmful to your baby.

If you take medicine for high blood pressure, keep taking it as prescribed by your doctor. Don't stop taking it unless your doctor tells you to. Your doctor may or may not lower your dose. Most doctors will have you stop taking angiotensin-converting enzymes (ACE inhibitors) and all angiotensin II receptor antagonists during pregnancy. Always ask your doctor what's best for you.