



"I'm going to
be a **mum!**"

Do not feel anxious about the changes that pregnancy brings. There are positive steps you can take to make this a wonderful experience for you

Being pregnant is a major milestone in a woman's life. You are ecstatic about carrying a new life, yet there may be periods when you worry that you might not be a good mum. Allay these fears by learning to manage stress, gathering family and friends around you for support so that you can enjoy your pregnancy and be better able to cope with the challenges ahead.

Positive changes

Studies have shown that some chronic

diseases such as heart disease, obesity and diabetes in adulthood are "programmed" during pregnancy and the early stages of a child's life. A woman's diet and lifestyle before conception and during pregnancy have important effects on the subsequent health of her child. It is therefore important that you adopt healthy habits even before you plan for a baby. However, it is never too late to start even if you are already pregnant. Now is a great time to take positive steps in making changes that will benefit your baby and yourself.



Keeping Healthy

Start with a good diet. Eating well not only ensures that you stay healthy but it also gives your unborn all the nutrients he* needs. Include low-impact exercises such as walking and swimming to your daily regime to maintain a healthy weight, which is helpful in reducing the risk of complications during pregnancy.

Say no to vices

Cigarette smoke is bad for you and your unborn child. It contains carbon monoxide and ammonia, chemicals that are easily absorbed into your blood stream and passed on to your baby.

Smokers have an increased rate of miscarriage, premature birth and complications during labour.

Smoking compromises the health of the unborn child. Each time a pregnant mum draws a puff, the baby's heart beats harder. Babies born to smokers tend to have lower birth weight, slower growth, damages to airways resulting in breathing problems or asthma, and have a higher chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

The risk is just as great if you do not smoke, but your family members do. It is best to get them to quit smoking.

Another no-no during pregnancy is drinking alcohol. You have a higher chance of miscarriage and the risks to your baby includes low birth weight, congenital abnormalities and defects in intelligence, language and memory.

Now is the best time to make a switch. Eat balanced meals, quit smoking, avoid alcohol, and give you and your baby a healthy start.

TIPS TO HELP YOU QUIT SMOKING

- Draw up the reasons why you want to quit smoking so that you are motivated to keep off cigarettes for good.
- Set a quit date and do not give yourself excuses.
- Call QuitLine at 1800 438 2000 to speak to the counsellors or request for free resources to help you stub it out.
- Throw away all cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays.
- Get family members and fellow smokers to support you and ask them to respect your decision to quit.
- Stay away from people, places and situations that might tempt you to smoke.
- If you experience withdrawal symptoms such as constant cravings or headache, follow the 3Ds:
 - o Distract yourself by doing something else
 - o Do deep breathing exercises
 - o Drink a glass of water, fruit juice or milk slowly
- Use the money saved from the cigarettes to treat yourself.

* For the sake of simplicity, he/his/him are used to represent both genders.



Prepare your older child

If you have an older child, do prepare him for the arrival of his new sibling. Share the good news with him as you inform the rest of the family that you are expecting. By reiterating that the baby is “ours” and not “mine”, you are helping him to accept the unborn as part of the family.

You can manage your older child’s expectations by talking positively about the baby. Explain to him that if he receives less attention from you when the baby arrives, it does not mean you love him less. Emphasise that you still love him very much. Let him know that he is a big brother to the newborn and you are relying on him to teach and look after the baby. This will give him a sense

of importance and responsibility. Check out libraries for colourful books that will introduce the idea of an upcoming baby in a fun manner (see page 100). You can also prepare him by letting him touch your growing belly, getting him to remind you to eat healthily or even helping you to decorate the baby’s room.

If your child is a toddler, do not wean him off his bottle, or pacifier if he is on it, or pack him off to nursery school once the baby arrives. Such actions may cause him to feel insecure and unwanted, and inadvertently create unhappiness over the new baby.

Most important of all, relax and enjoy your pregnancy!