

## Dos and don'ts for a healthy pregnancy

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FOR a woman trying to conceive or one who is already pregnant, she will likely be exposed to information on a wide range of pregnancy-related issues such as methods to encourage fertility, the dos and don'ts during pregnancy as well as the things to consume during confinement.



In addition to advice from an obstetrician, the woman is likely handed a large number of materials on how to lead her life for the next nine months, as well as countless tips from dotting family members.

However, have you ever thought about the reasons for some of these pregnancy habits and practices? Here are reasons for some of the things that you should be aware of when you are pregnant.

### Avoid smoking and alcohol

One of many things you learn as a hopeful mother is not to smoke or consume alcohol during your pregnancy. In a 2010 article published in *Preventive Medicine*, the study concluded maternal smoking during pregnancy was associated with decreased birth weight, low scholastic achievement and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Furthermore, children born from women who smoked during pregnancy were found to be more likely to try smoking at an earlier age due to physiologic nicotine addiction. When you are pregnant, you are feeding your baby with the food and drinks you consume. Though you may have only alcohol during social outings and stop after one glass, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism in the United States claims alcohol can affect your baby's growth and cause foetal alcohol syndrome. Children with this disorder may be born small, and have problems seeing or hearing, learning disabilities and behavioural problems.

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### Avoid raw food

As with alcohol, you must be careful with the food you consume. Raw and undercooked meat and eggs can carry food-borne illnesses such as listeriosis and toxoplasmosis. The greater danger is when such illnesses lead to severe birth defects or even miscarriages.

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#### Avoid excess caffeine

Do you enjoy a strong cup of coffee to start the day? Or perhaps your social circle frequently meets up at a convenient coffee chain outlet? While pregnant, it may be wise to cut down on your coffee intake.

Though more research is required to determine the full effects of caffeine on a baby, some reports suggest caffeine can travel through the placenta and increase your baby's heart rate. To be safe, you should always seek advice from an obstetrician on your daily food and beverage consumption.

#### Take more naps

In a 1998 poll called Women and Sleep conducted by the National Sleep Foundation in the US, 78% of women reported disturbed sleep during their pregnancy compared to other times. Among the reasons for fatigue and sleeping problems for expecting mothers is because of changing hormone levels, such as the rise of progesterone levels that can cause daytime sleepiness. Many women may also experience insomnia due to emotions and anxiety as they enter the last trimester. These feelings plus common pregnancy-related discomforts such as nausea will no doubt deprive the mother of much-needed sleep.

While there are many responsibilities for an expecting mother, she must follow these important steps to increase her chances of giving birth to a healthy baby.