

- Glands

Healthy thyroid, healthy pregnancy

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Whether you're already a mom or are thinking of becoming one, you know the importance of prenatal care. Monitoring the development of your unborn baby as well as your own health and wellbeing with a doctor's guidance helps avert potential health issues early. Regular prenatal care ensures you and your little one come out strong and ready for this exciting new chapter in your lives.



But the top hospital in the Philippines, Makati Medical Center (MakatiMed), believes that caring for your baby should begin even before you try to get pregnant.

“Preconception healthcare makes you aware of how your health condition and risk factors could affect your unborn baby, should you decide to get pregnant,” says Dr. Maria Theresa T. Lopez, an obstetrics and gynecology specialist. “It also means knowing which foods, medications, lifestyle habits, and preexisting health problems pose harm to your baby.”

If you're diabetic or have uncontrolled high blood sugar around the time you conceive, MakatiMed explains that you increase your baby's risks for preterm birth, stillbirth, and birth defects. Chronic hypertension may develop into preeclampsia 20 weeks into your pregnancy. Preeclampsia has been associated with less blood flow to the placenta, slow or decreased fetal growth, and premature delivery, among other complications. Pregnancy and your thyroid. A well-functioning thyroid is also essential to a healthy pregnancy and baby. Shaped like a butterfly and located at the base of the neck, the thyroid is a gland responsible for the hormones that allow the body to perform crucial tasks. “It plays a major role in the growth and development of our body and how well our body metabolizes or processes what we eat and drink into energy depends on thyroid hormones,” Dr. Lopez points out.

According to MakatiMed, the thyroid sometimes produces small amounts of hormones (hypothyroidism) or too much (hyperthyroidism). Either way, they can affect your pregnancy and baby.

“With an abnormal thyroid function, your baby could have low birth weight problems with growth and the development of the brain and nervous system,” Dr. Lopez, explains.

Could you have a thyroid problem? “Signs and symptoms of a thyroid problem include goiter or a swollen thyroid, unusually slow or fast heart rate, raised itchy rash, weight

loss or weight gain, fatigue, and sensitivity to cold or heat,” Dr. Lopez says. “A physical exam and blood tests to check the levels of your thyroid hormones will confirm if you have hypothyroidism or hyperthyroidism.”

Medications can help restore the levels of your thyroid hormones. They’re also safe to take during pregnancy and may only need adjustments in dosage.

Dr. Lopez advises, “Let your doctor know if you’re taking medicine for a preexisting thyroid condition. And don’t hesitate to tell your health practitioner if you suspect you could have a thyroid issue. Once your thyroid function is under control, you can have a smooth pregnancy journey.”

For information, call the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology through MakatiMed On-Call at 88888999, email mmc@makatimed.net.ph, or visit www.makatimed.net.ph. Follow @IamMakatiMed on Facebook*and Twitter.