

Going to the Doctor

Why are Prenatal Visits Important?

A woman needs a prenatal check-up as soon as she thinks she might be pregnant. The prenatal visit is an important way to make sure your partner remains healthy and your baby is growing and developing properly.

What Happens at Prenatal Visits?

The doctor will check your partner's and baby's physical condition, listen to the baby's heartbeat and on some visits, do an ultrasound — that's a picture of the baby inside the womb. You can get lots of information and instructions at the prenatal visits, such as how the baby is developing, the gender and any health issues. Don't be nervous about asking questions at these visits. This is your opportunity to learn as much as you can about what is happening in real time with your child.

Most women see an obstetrician/gynecologist (OB/GYN) for prenatal visits. In Texas, certified nurse-midwives, licensed midwives, and family practice physicians can also give prenatal care and help with



births. Have a conversation with your partner about which type of birthing professional will help deliver your baby.

How Often Will She Have Prenatal Visits?

Some women go for a prenatal visit once a month at first, then every two weeks, then every week when it gets close to time for the birth. Your partner will have her own schedule for these visits. How often she needs to see her doctor depends on her and the baby's needs. Some dads have work schedules that won't allow them to attend every visit. Milestone visits are a great way to catch up on your baby's development. You may also be able to speak to your partner about telling the doctor to allow you to receive some information about her and the baby's health over the phone.

Tip

Go to the prenatal visits and ask questions. This is your time to learn about your child's development. Take a look at the prenatal test chart on page 39 for common prenatal tests done for baby.

What Questions Should I Ask the Doctor About Pregnancy?

- What are signs and symptoms that something is wrong with my partner or the baby?
- What is the difference between normal pregnancy emotions and depression?
- What is the number for the 24-hour nurse in case we have questions?
- What is healthy weight gain, and how can I help her?
- What are things that she shouldn't do while pregnant?
- How can I help her stay physically healthy?
- What are the important visits I will want to attend?

What Questions Should I Ask the Doctor About the Hospital Experience?

- Where will you deliver my baby? If you are not available when my partner goes into labor, who will deliver my baby?
- Can we visit the hospital or birthing center before the baby is born?
- Who can be present during delivery?
- How will we know when it's time to go to the hospital?
- What classes are available to new and expecting parents? Are any offered at the hospital or birthing centers?
- What is a scheduled delivery and how do we prepare?
- How can I help during contractions?
- What are the risks and benefits of using anesthesia, such as an epidural, during labor and delivery?
- What are other options to reduce pain for my partner during labor and delivery?
- How do you decide when to give my partner anesthesia?



Dad's Guide to Fatherhood

Reference:

Texas Office of the Attorney General. (2019). Dad's guide to fatherhood. Texas Health and Human Services. <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/sites/default/files/files/child-support/Publications/13-06-15131DadsGuidetoFatherhood-ACC.pdf>