

Schedule of prenatal care

DURING PREGNANCY, REGULAR VISITS WITH YOUR OBSTETRICIAN ARE IMPORTANT TO HELP KEEP YOU AND YOUR BABY HEALTHY.

How often will I see my Obstetrician?

Each pregnancy is unique, but in general you will be seen every four weeks until you reach 28 weeks. You will then have appointments every two weeks until 36 weeks. After this, you will be seen every week. The first visit is usually the longest. You should allow 45 minutes. The remaining visits are usually 10 to 15 minutes.

What to expect at each visit:

FIRST TRIMESTER

6 – 10 weeks: Make your initial appointment as soon as you think you're pregnant. This will be your longest visit. Your partner may want to come to this visit. Your Obstetrician will ask about your medical history (menstrual cycle, contraception, past pregnancies, medical history, family history and medications) and will perform a physical exam and routine prenatal lab tests. Your due date will be established using your last menstrual period, and possibly an ultrasound will be performed. Very few women give birth on their actual due date, but it provides an appropriate timeline for tests and procedures. Once established in the first trimester, your due date does not change and allows your Obstetrician to accurately monitor the progress of your pregnancy.

7 – 12 weeks: You will be seen every four weeks for the remainder of your first trimester. We will check your blood pressure and weight at each visit. After about 10 to 12 weeks, your Obstetrician will listen to the baby's heartbeat with a small device called a Doppler at each visit. Between 11 and 13 weeks, an ultrasound appointment will be made. This ultrasound, called a nuchal translucency screening, measures the thickness of the space at the back of the neck of the fetus and is considered as a screening for chromosomal abnormality such as Down syndrome.

Non-invasive genetic testing can be performed at this time as well, if you desire. You can discuss genetic screening options with your Obstetrician.

SECOND TRIMESTER

Each visit will occur every four weeks. At each visit, you will have your blood pressure and weight checked, and your baby's heartbeat will be measured by Doppler.

13 – 16 weeks: You will see your Obstetrician.

18 – 20 weeks: You will see your Obstetrician. You will have an ultrasound around 20 weeks to look at your baby's anatomy and to determine gender if you would like to know.

24 – 28 weeks: You will see your Obstetrician. We also recommend you take a glucose test to screen for gestational diabetes within this time. Please allow one additional hour for this blood test.

THIRD TRIMESTER

Now your visits will occur every two weeks until 36 weeks and then every week until you deliver. At each visit, your blood pressure, weight and baby's heartbeat will be measured, and the position of your baby will be checked. You will receive an ultrasound to determine growth of the baby around 32 – 34 weeks.

29 – 34 weeks: You will discuss aspects of childbirth, breastfeeding and postpartum care with your Obstetrician. We will offer the Tdap (tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis) vaccine around this time.

35 – 37 weeks: Your Obstetrician will offer to do a pelvic exam. You will also be tested for Group B streptococcus to test for bacteria that can cause serious infections in newborns if not treated during labor.

After 37 weeks: Weekly visits with your Obstetrician will now occur. Your Obstetrician may check your cervix as you approach your due date for dilation and to be sure your baby is in the head-down position.

After 40 weeks: Your Obstetrician will recommend antenatal testing between 40 and 41 weeks to check your baby's general well-being. This test includes a quick ultrasound to measure the amniotic fluid around the baby and 20 minutes of monitoring the baby's heart rate with the external fetal heart rate monitoring machine. At this time, your Obstetrician may also discuss options for induction of labor, if you are still pregnant.

We are here to support you through your pregnancy. These visits are an ideal time to discuss any pregnancy-related concerns.