

# Reduce Your Risk for Preterm Birth

Babies born before 37 weeks of pregnancy are called premature. Premature babies can have serious health problems at birth and later in life. About 1 in 10 babies is born prematurely each year in the United States.

## Are you at risk for pre-term labor and premature birth?

We don't always know for sure what causes preterm labor and premature birth. Sometimes labor starts on its own without warning. Even if you do everything right during pregnancy, you can still give birth early.

We do know some things may make you more likely to have preterm labor and premature birth. These are called risk factors. Having a risk factor doesn't mean for sure that you'll have preterm labor or give birth early but it may increase your chances.

## Here's what you can do to reduce your risk for preterm labor and premature birth:

- **Get to a healthy weight before pregnancy and gain the right amount of weight during pregnancy.** Talk to your provider about the right amount of weight for you before and during pregnancy.



- **Don't smoke, drink alcohol, use street drugs or abuse prescription drugs.** Ask your provider about programs that can help you quit such as Healthy Start.
- **Go to your first prenatal care checkup as soon as you think you're pregnant.** During pregnancy, go to all your prenatal care checkups, even if you're feeling fine. Prenatal care helps your provider make sure you and your baby are healthy.
- **Get treated for chronic health conditions, like high blood pressure,**

**diabetes, depression and thyroid problems.** Depression is a medical condition in which strong feelings of sadness last for a long time and interfere with your daily life. It needs treatment to get better. The thyroid is a gland in your neck that makes hormones that help your body store and use energy from food.

- **Protect yourself from infections.** Talk to your provider about vaccinations that can help protect you from certain infections. Wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom or blowing your nose. Don't eat raw meat, fish or eggs. Have safe sex. Don't touch cat poop.
- **Reduce your stress.** Eat healthy foods and do something active every day. Ask family and friends for help around the house or taking care of other children. Get help if your partner abuses you. Talk to your boss about how to lower your stress at work.
- **Wait at least 18 months between giving birth and getting pregnant again.** Use birth control until you're ready to get pregnant again. If you're older than 35 or you've had a miscarriage or stillbirth, talk to your provider about how long to wait between pregnancies.

Source: March of Dimes, [www.MarchofDimes.org](http://www.MarchofDimes.org).

# A Healthy Start

BULLETIN Volume 0121

## Heatstroke Safety Tips

**NEVER LEAVE CHILDREN ALONE IN A CAR**  
REMEMBER TO ACT

Healthy Start can help you have a healthy pregnancy, baby and family!

We offer FREE services for pregnant women and families with children up to age 3.

HOME VISITING

PRENATAL EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

FREE SCREENING AND SERVICES

PARENTING EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

CARE COORDINATION

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Sometimes babies sleep so peacefully that busy parents can forget they are even there. Other times, we might be tempted to leave kids in the car while we run into the store or dash to do an errand. Children can also end up alone in cars if the doors or trunk are left unlocked. Each year, 38 children die from being left unattended in a vehicle. That's why children should never be alone in a car. It can lead to heatstroke, which causes serious injury or even death. Young children are particularly at risk since their bodies heat up three to five times faster than an adult's.

**Reduce the Number of Deaths from Heatstroke by Remembering to ACT**

**A**void heatstroke-related injury and death by never leaving a child alone in

a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not inside so kids don't get in on their own.

**C**reate reminders. Keep a stuffed animal or other memento in your child's car seat when it's empty, and move it to the front seat as a visual reminder when your child is in the back seat. Or place and secure your phone, briefcase or purse in the back seat when traveling with your child.

**T**ake action. If you see a child alone in a car, call 911. Emergency personnel want you to call. They are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life.

For more information, visit the website [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org) and search "heatstroke."



Connect  
877-678-9355

The Connect number is a one-stop entry point to services for pregnant women, caregivers and families with young children. Participating programs: Healthy Start, MIECHV/Parents as Teachers and Healthy Families.



Florida  
Healthy Start  
Central Healthy Start | Healthy Start of North Central Florida

Healthy Start of North Central Florida  
[www.HealthyStartNCF.org](http://www.HealthyStartNCF.org)

Counties: Alachua, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Lafayette, Levy, Marion, Putnam, Suwannee, Union

Central Healthy Start Florida  
[www.CentralHealthyStart.org](http://www.CentralHealthyStart.org)

Counties: Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Sumter



Administrative Office: 1785 NW 80th Blvd., Gainesville, FL 32606  
An Affiliate Partner of WellFlorida Council [www.WellFlorida.org](http://www.WellFlorida.org)





# What to Expect While Breastfeeding

Every mother's experience with breastfeeding is different. Whether this is your first baby or you are an experienced mom, each baby is unique. Breastfeeding will be a learning process.

## Your baby is learning how to:

- Latch
- Suck
- Swallow

## You are learning how to:

- Position your baby to feed
- Observe and follow his or her hunger cues
- Manage your breast milk supply and breast health

## First Days and Weeks

**Milk Coming In** At birth, your breasts will make a thick, yellowish substance called colostrum. Colostrum is packed with nutrients and other important substances that help your baby start building up his or her immune system.

There will not be a lot of this liquid at first, but the amount will gradually increase over the first couple of days. Most babies will get all the nutrition they need through colostrum during the first few days of life. As you begin breastfeeding, your baby's sucking will tell your body to start making milk. For most

mothers, this thinner, whiter form of milk comes in by about 3 days after birth, but may take longer for first-time moms. You may notice your breasts feeling full, hard, and warm as this happens. Your baby may begin to want to breastfeed more frequently around this time. If you are concerned about your milk coming in, talk to a lactation consultant, your doctor, nurse or Healthy Start Home Visitor.

**Leaking** Your breasts may feel full and leak. Over time, the leaking may slow down as your body gets used to breastfeeding. If your breasts leak, you may find it helpful to put disposable or cloth pads in your bra.

**Engorgement** Over the first few weeks after birth, your breasts may become larger, firm, warm and uncomfortable as your body adjusts to making milk. This is called engorgement. As your breasts get used to filling and emptying as you feed your baby, this should improve. Feeding your baby frequently should help to prevent severe engorgement and relieve discomfort.



**Sore Nipples** During the first few weeks of breastfeeding, your nipples may be sore or sensitive as they adjust to your baby's sucking. If you have cracked or damaged nipple skin, or pain that is not improving over the first 1–2 weeks, talk to a lactation consultant, your doctor, nurse or Healthy Start Home Visitor.

**Pain While Breastfeeding** Although your breasts and nipples may be tender or uncomfortable, once your baby is well-latched, breastfeeding should not be painful. Sometimes pain can happen if you have an improper latch, a milk duct that is clogged (plugged milk duct), a breast infection (mastitis) or other issues. If you have pain while breastfeeding, especially with a fever, talk with your doctor or nurse to figure out why.

**Postpartum Depression** Postpartum depression is depression that some women feel after having a baby. Feelings of postpartum depression are more intense and last longer than those of "baby blues," a term used to describe the worry, sadness and tiredness many women experience after having a baby. "Baby blues" symptoms typically resolve on their own within a few days. Postpartum depression is common and doesn't feel the same for everyone. How often symptoms occur, how long they last and how intense they may feel can be different for each person. Mothers with postpartum depression can usually continue to breastfeed. If you think you may be

experiencing postpartum depression, or have other mental health concerns, contact your healthcare provider for help right away. Many medications do pass into breast milk, but you can work with your healthcare provider to identify treatment options that are safe to use while breastfeeding.

## As Your Baby Gets Older

**Teething/Biting** You can continue to breastfeed once your baby starts to get teeth. Babies use their tongues, not their teeth, to breastfeed. If your baby is latched well and sucking, you should not feel the teeth while your baby is feeding. Once in a while babies might bite the nipple or breast, especially when they are teething. Talk to a lactation consultant for tips on how to teach your baby not to bite.

**Refusing to Breastfeed** Sometimes babies will suddenly stop wanting to breastfeed. Many times it is hard to know why this happens. Refusing to breastfeed is usually temporary and your baby will start breastfeeding again within a few days. Some reasons your baby may refuse breastfeeding include teething, illness, stress, a change in environment such as a new childcare situation, or a major change in routine. This usually does not mean your baby is ready to wean.

## To help your baby return to breastfeeding:

- Keep offering your baby the breast or breast milk from a bottle if bottle feeding.
- Spend extra time cuddling and holding your baby.
- Offer the breast in quiet spaces and when your baby is sleepy or relaxed.
- Pump or express milk frequently to keep your breast milk supply up until your baby starts breastfeeding again.

**Distracted Breastfeeding** Your baby is starting to notice all the things going on around him or her. This can mean that your baby might get distracted while breastfeeding. Help your baby focus by turning off the TV, dimming the lights or feeding in a quiet place.

**Weaning** Although breastfeeding is recommended until your baby is at least 12 months old, weaning may happen before then. Learn about when and how to wean your baby from breastfeeding by visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website ([www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov)) and search "weaning."

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov).

# Substance Use During Pregnancy



## Drugs and Supplements

**Always talk with your doctor or midwife before taking any medicines during pregnancy.** Read drug labels for risks for pregnant or breastfeeding women. Do not take more than the prescribed dose of any medication, and do not take any medication that is not prescribed to you.

Drugs include street drugs, prescription and over-the-counter drugs, supplements and herbal products. **Babies born to moms who use drugs during pregnancy can have serious problems including premature birth, low birth-weight, heart defects and birth defects.**

**The best way to keep your baby safe from drugs is to avoid them!** If you feel you have a problem, please contact your doctor or midwife for help.

## Alcohol

**When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, so does her baby.** There is no known safe level of alcohol use during pregnancy or while trying to get pregnant. All types of alcohol are equally harmful, including all wines and beer. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause miscarriage, stillbirth and a range of lifelong physical, behavioral and intellectual disabilities.

**What if I drank before I knew I was pregnant?** Make sure you get regular prenatal checkups. Tell your healthcare provider you had been drinking and ask for advice.

**Remember, it is never too late to stop drinking. Because brain growth takes place throughout pregnancy, the sooner you stop drinking the safer it will be for you and your baby.** If you are unable to stop drinking, talk to your healthcare provider. Resources are available to help you.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov) and March of Dimes, [www.MarchofDimes.org](http://www.MarchofDimes.org). View these websites for more information on substance use during pregnancy.