

Prevention

A pre-pregnancy visit with a healthcare provider is especially important for a woman who has a medical problem. The doctor will discuss how women with this condition usually fare during pregnancy. For some diseases (such as lupus), pregnancy can mean increased risk of health problems for mother and baby.

Sometimes, the medication a woman needs to control a medical condition can cause problems for the baby. There may be another medication available that is safer for use in pregnancy. In some cases there is no other medication, and a woman must weigh the risks to the baby when deciding whether or not to become pregnant.

A woman who has not had a pre-pregnancy visit should contact a healthcare provider as soon as she learns she is pregnant. Often, the provider will schedule the first prenatal visit within a day or two, instead of waiting until eight to 10 weeks of pregnancy. This is because certain medical conditions can increase the risk of miscarriage. The provider will want to be sure that any medication is adjusted properly to increase the chance of having a successful pregnancy.

In some high-risk pregnancies, it's not unusual to be ordered on to bed rest or even a mandatory hospital stay. Keeping your routine as normal as possible will go a long way in reducing your overall stress level. While staying in the hospital is sometimes unavoidable, research proves that bed rest at home is less stressful and often a better alternative. Home-care nurses can help organize appointments, find resources and provide prenatal education. If a hospital stay is required, be your own advocate and ask for daily reports so you know what's happening and why. Keep your spirits up by bathing daily, wearing your street clothes (if possible) and spending time enjoying quiet activities.

In addition to our Main Offices in Valhalla, for your convenience Maternal-Fetal Medicine physicians also see patients in community locations in the Hudson Valley:

Suffern Medical Pavilion

Lafayette Ave Suite 390
Suffern, NY 10901
Hours: Fridays, 8:30 a.m. – 4 p.m.
To schedule an appointment,
call (914) 493-2250

Orange Regional Medical Center

60 Prospect Road
Middletown, NY 10940
Hours: Mondays, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
To schedule an appointment, call (845) 342-7120 and press 1

Hudson Valley Hospital Center

1980 Crompond Road
Cortland Manor, NY 10567
Hours: Tuesdays, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
To schedule an appointment,
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Learning About...

High Risk Pregnancy



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A high risk pregnancy is one in which some condition puts the mother, the developing fetus or both at higher-than-normal risk for complications during or after the pregnancy and birth.

Causes of High Risk Pregnancy

There are factors that can be present before a woman becomes pregnant, that can cause a high-risk pregnancy. Risk factors for a high-risk pregnancy can include:

- Young or old maternal age
- Being overweight or underweight
- Having had problems in previous pregnancies
- More than 5 previous pregnancies
- Pre-existing health conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes or cancer

A pregnancy is also considered high-risk when prenatal tests indicate that the baby has a serious health problem and the mother will need special tests, and possibly medication, to carry the baby safely through to delivery.

Health problems can also develop during a pregnancy that can make it high-risk. Such problems may occur even in a woman who was previously healthy. Certain maternal or fetal problems may prompt a physician to deliver a baby early or to choose a cesarean section rather than a vaginal delivery.



Diagnosis

A woman with a high-risk pregnancy will need closer monitoring than the average pregnant woman. Such monitoring may include more frequent visits with the primary caregiver, tests to monitor the medical problem, blood tests to check the levels of medication, amniocentesis, serial ultrasound examination, and fetal monitoring. These tests are designed to track the original condition, survey for complications, verify that the fetus is growing adequately, and make decisions regarding whether labor may need to be induced to allow for early delivery of the fetus.

Treatment

Treatment varies widely with the type of disease, the effect that pregnancy has on the disease, and the effect that the disease has on pregnancy. Additional tests may help determine the need for changes in medication or additional treatment.

Prognosis

The prognosis depends in large part on the specific medical condition. Some medical conditions make it difficult to get pregnant and lead to a higher risk of problems in the baby.

There are many medical conditions that usually do not interfere with pregnancy but are themselves affected by pregnancy. Some women notice that their symptoms are better during pregnancy, some find their condition worse and some women notice no change in symptoms during pregnancy. Due to this unpredictability, all women with chronic illnesses should be monitored carefully throughout pregnancy.

Diabetes is a medical condition that is both affected by pregnancy and affects pregnancy. Diabetes can lead to miscarriages, birth defects, and stillbirths. When a woman monitors her blood sugar carefully and treats high levels with insulin, the risk of these negative outcomes drops a great deal. Unfortunately, pregnancy makes diabetes

much harder to control. In general, blood sugar and the need for insulin to control it rise throughout pregnancy.

Most medical conditions do not lead to complications in pregnancy. With frequent visits to healthcare providers, and careful attention to medication, women with medical problems usually enjoy healthy, successful pregnancies. There are a few medical conditions that can cause health risks to both mother and baby during pregnancy. Women with these medical problems should consider these risks before deciding to become pregnant. Many of these women will benefit from the care of a perinatologist during pregnancy. Only rarely are the risks to the mother so high that she should not consider pregnancy at all.

Coping

In some high-risk pregnancies, it's not unusual to be ordered on to bed rest or even a mandatory hospital stay. Keeping your routine as normal as possible will go a long way in reducing your overall stress level. If a hospital stay is required, be your own advocate and ask for daily reports so you know what's happening and why. Keep your spirits up by bathing daily, wearing your street clothes (if possible) and spending time enjoying quiet activities.

