



# **Pregnancy is a journey. You don't have to walk it alone.**

From prenatal care to postpartum support,  
ensuring a safe pregnancy starts with preparation.



## Preparing for a Safe & Healthy Pregnancy

**Having a baby is exciting, but it can also be overwhelming.** It's important to physically and mentally prepare yourself for the highs and lows of pregnancy. That means learning about where to seek prenatal care and how you can prepare your body by making dietary changes and exercising.

### Find Prenatal Care

Prenatal care is available through your health plan and, for the uninsured, through Medicaid, regardless of your income or immigration status. The NYC Department of Health also offers free-to-low-cost doula care through community health partners and neighborhood health action centers.

Prenatal care beginning in the first trimester is important. Your

doctor or midwife will evaluate you for any pregnancy risks, monitor your unborn baby's development, and prescribe medication or supplements as appropriate.

### Prepare Your Body

To prepare your body for a baby, changes to your diet should begin three months to a year in advance. When you are trying to have a baby, you should consider increasing intake of folic acid, calcium, Omega-3, Vitamin D3, proteins, and iron.

During pregnancy, exercise can promote your physical and mental health, while increasing oxygen intake and strengthening your muscles for childbirth. While modifications may be required, exercises can include walking, stationary cycling, swimming, and yoga.



## Taking Care of Your Emotional Well-Being

**Pregnancy is filled with beautiful moments, but it can be hard to enjoy them all.** Maintaining your mental health or emotional well-being before, during, and after pregnancy can help you achieve a positive quality of life for you and your newborn. Because your body goes through big changes during pregnancy, mood changes, anxiety, and depression can be common. If you are experiencing these symptoms it is important to get support. After all, your mental health is just as important as your physical health.

### Create An Emotional Wellness Plan

An emotional wellness plan can help identify activities and stress relief strategies that assist in managing your mental health. Here are some ideas to help you build your own emotional wellness plan:

- Try aromatherapy to reduce tension
- Start a yoga practice to get exercise while reducing stress
- Cook healthy meals to nourish your body
- Find a therapist to help cope with your emotions
- Join a support group to connect with other expectant parents



## Building Your Pregnancy Care Team

**Preparing for your baby can be overwhelming, but you don't have to do it alone.** You can build a pregnancy care team of clinical and supportive professionals who can help guide you through every step of your pregnancy.

Your clinical team may include:

- Obstetrician/gynecologist
- Midwife
- Women's health nurse practitioner
- Perinatal nurse
- Maternal fetal medicine specialist
- Anesthesiologist
- Nutritionist
- Social worker
- Psychiatrist

Your supportive care team may include:

- Doula
- Community health worker
- Acupuncturist
- Prenatal yoga instructor
- Prenatal massage therapist
- Pelvic floor therapist
- Lactation counselor
- Support groups
- Family members and friends

Surround yourself with a care team that centers and respects your needs. Everyone that is a part of your care team should be supportive of your choices while also being encouraging and putting you at ease.



## Being Your Own Health Advocate

**You are the driver of your own pregnancy.** You have the right to make decisions and request accommodations that are best for you. Here are some tips to help you be your own health advocate:

- If you don't understand your diagnosis, a test, or a medication which you have been prescribed, ask questions until you receive an answer that makes sense to you.
- Ask for a second opinion if you disagree with your doctor or midwife's diagnosis or recommendations at any point in your pregnancy.
- Develop a birth plan with your care team to outline your choices and the birthing experience you would like to have.
- Decide who you want to have by your side during childbirth and ensure they are aware of your preferences.
- Ask your doctor or midwife to explain your pain management options for childbirth.
- Familiarize yourself with the New York State Hospitals' Bill of Rights that entitles you by law to have access to respectful and anti-racist care, privacy, and knowledge of all available care and childbirth options.



## Navigating Your Postpartum Journey

**While you're taking care of your baby, it's important to also take care of you.** The postpartum period, which is frequently referred to as the fourth trimester, is just as important as your pregnancy and birthing experience—for both yourself and your newborn. As you navigate this new chapter, consider the following:

- Scheduling a postpartum visit with your doctor or midwife to address any birthing complications.
- Enlisting the help of family and friends so you can get a much needed break and sleep.
- Meeting with a doula for strategies to heal and recover at home.
- Finding a lactation specialist to help support you and your baby with breastfeeding.
- Starting a low-impact exercise routine that includes a combination of aerobic activity and strength training for your pelvic and abdominal muscles.
- Talking to your partner, family, friends, or a mental health expert about the emotions you are experiencing, which can include mood swings, anxiety, and depression among others.





**Pregnancy can be  
beautiful and magical.**

**It can also be  
daunting and hard.**

**But you don't have to  
do it alone.**

Our office is here to offer resources for before,  
during and after childbirth, so you can prepare  
for a safe and healthy pregnancy.

Learn more at  
[www.brooklyn-usa.org/healthypregnancy](http://www.brooklyn-usa.org/healthypregnancy)

