

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Tips on What to Expect When You're Expecting a Baby

You're excited about expecting a baby, but you didn't expect to feel so terrible. Food makes you nauseous, you feel fat, and you're unbelievably tired.

Learning about the changes your body and mind may experience during pregnancy will help you adjust to the new you.

Recognize that every pregnancy is different. Your body will experience changes over each trimester, but they may not be exactly in line with the experiences of other pregnant women. If you are very sick during this period and find it hard to cope, talk to your doctor or midwife. Meanwhile, here are some tips to help you through this unique time:

Body Changes

- Changes may range from nausea and fatigue in the first three months, to difficulty in sleeping, having sex and controlling your bladder during the last three months.
- Help to alleviate worry about your body's changes and the impending birth through good prenatal care, taking classes and reading about pregnancy and parenting along with discussions with your obstetrician or midwife.
- Pay special attention to your diet. Now more than ever it is time for healthy eating!
- Be sure to exercise rest and avoid using alcohol and drugs.
- Ask for your physician's advice before taking over-the-counter medications.

Psychological Changes

- How you feel psychologically will affect how much you are affected by your body's changes.
- If you are unhappy about your pregnancy, it's important to talk to your doctor about your feelings.
- If you often feel depressed or have unresolved problems in your relationship, then talking to a professional can help.

Planning Ahead

There are many changes you can think about and plan for, such as:

- Will you breastfeed?
- How will your baby change your lifestyle?
- Will you continue to work? If not, how will you support yourself?
- If you plan to work, how much maternity leave will you get? Where can you find good child care?

Plan to cement your couple relationship during this time. Consider a vacation or pursue hobbies; it may be a long time before you have the luxury of being totally alone together again. Having long, serious talks before the baby is born will help you get through those nights when you and your spouse are too tired to talk.

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For Future Fathers

- Your support and participation during the pregnancy and birth is the greatest gift you can give. You can offer your support by understanding the changes your partner is going through.
- Recognize that it's normal for a pregnant woman to sometimes not feel like herself, in body or spirit.
- Your partner may worry that the baby has more control over her body than she does.

When to Seek Help

- Nine months is a long time to be sick. If you're feeling nauseous or unwell for a long time, talk to your doctor.
- If you are depressed or feel overwhelmed, discuss your concerns with your family doctor, obstetrician or midwife.
- You may have mixed feelings about your pregnancy, which are quite natural. A confidential talk with your obstetrician can help you sort out your feelings.
- If you are a single parent, develop a network of friends and family to help out.

Though being pregnant can be quite a trip, physically and emotionally, support is available. By knowing what to expect when you or your partner is expecting, and consulting with your doctor, midwife or other health care professional with the questions or concerns you have, you will gain a better understanding of the experience, and be able to enlist the help and support you need.