

Pointers For *Parents-To-Be*

Eight Steps To A Healthy Pregnancy

(NAPSA)—Experts agree women may greatly improve the chances of a problem-free pregnancy and a healthy baby by following eight simple steps. The chances of having a problem-free pregnancy and a healthy baby may greatly improve if you follow eight simple guidelines.

1. Choose an obstetrician or midwife you can build a good relationship with during pregnancy. Finding the right person can take time, so get started right away. Good prenatal care is essential to your baby's health.

2. Watch your diet. Up your intake of protein and calories, as well as certain vitamins and minerals such as folic acid and iron. Steer clear of raw seafood, unpasteurized milk and soft cheeses to avoid bacteria.

3. Take prenatal vitamins. Most prenatal supplements contain more folic acid, iron and calcium than the standard multivitamin. These are important to reduce a baby's risk of developing birth defects.

4. Exercise regularly. A good exercise program can give you the strength and endurance a woman needs to carry the weight gained during pregnancy and handle the stress of labor. It will also make it easier to get back in shape once the baby is born.

5. Just say no to alcohol. Women who have more than two drinks a day are at greater risk for giving birth to a baby with fetal alcohol syndrome.

6. Cut back on caffeine. While



Exercise can make pregnancy, labor and recovery after childbirth easier, say experts at an informative Web site.

a cup or two of coffee a day won't hurt your baby, no one knows for sure what the effects of drinking three to four cups are.

7. Stop smoking. Smoking increases your risk of miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, abnormal placental implantation, premature placental detachment, vaginal bleeding, premature delivery and infant death.

8. Get some rest. The fatigue you feel during the first and third trimesters is your body's way of saying "slow down." So listen and take it easy. Relaxation techniques such as yoga, stretching, deep breathing and massage are a good way to combat stress and get a better night's sleep.

Tips on pregnancy, childbirth and life with baby are found at www.babycenter.com.