



# Important things to know in early pregnancy

---

This information will help you through your first 20 weeks of pregnancy. For more detailed information on health and wellbeing during pregnancy, visit our website: [thewomens.org.au](https://thewomens.org.au).

## Visiting your local doctor

While you wait for your appointment at the Women's, it's important to keep seeing your local doctor (GP) for care. They can help you with:

- organising tests like blood and urine tests, genetic tests and ultrasounds
- answering any questions or concerns you have about your pregnancy, health or family history
- talking through any mixed feelings you might have about being pregnant
- giving advice on diet and exercise
- checking if any medicines, vitamins, or supplements you take are safe in pregnancy, including natural and alternative medicines
- discussing how things are at home and at work
- supporting you with issues around alcohol, drugs, or quitting smoking
- shared maternity care.

## Shared maternity care

If you'd like pregnancy appointments close to your home or work, our shared maternity care may suit you. With this option, your baby is born at the Women's and you see one of our accredited shared care providers, like a GP, midwife, or obstetrician, for most of your care. You'll only need to visit the hospital a few times. You can discuss this option at your first appointment at the Women's.

## Genetic testing

You can have tests to check for genetic conditions, like Down syndrome. These can be arranged by your GP if you choose. It's best to do these tests in the first 16 weeks of pregnancy - some tests need to be done by 12 weeks.

## Ultrasound

We recommend an ultrasound at around 20 weeks to check your baby's development. You may also need an earlier scan as part of a Down syndrome test, or if you're unsure of your dates. Your GP can organise this for you.

## Pain or bleeding in early pregnancy

If you have pain or bleeding in the first 16 weeks of pregnancy, see your GP or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.

## Mixed feelings about being pregnant?

Talking with a pregnancy options counsellor may help. You can discuss your choices and get support to decide what is right for you.

Call [1800MyOptions](https://1800MyOptions.org.au) on 1800 696 784 for information about pregnancy options counselling.

## Taking care of yourself in early pregnancy

To have a healthy pregnancy we recommend that you:

- **avoid** alcohol, drugs, smoking, and products containing retinol and vitamin A
- **make sure** all your medicines, vitamins, herbal preparations and alternative therapies are safe in pregnancy

- **reduce** caffeine to no more than 3 cups of coffee or tea per day
- **eat more** foods with folate, iodine and vitamin D.

For more details, visit our [website](#).

## Common discomforts in early pregnancy

It's normal to have a few discomforts in early pregnancy, including:

- morning sickness (feeling sick or vomiting, which may last on and off all day)
- needing to wee more often
- back pain, leg cramps and feeling tired
- craving certain foods or avoiding others
- rashes and itchy skin
- constipation
- heartburn
- larger, more tender breasts.

## Depression

Everyone feels sad at times, but if you feel very unhappy most of the time, you may be depressed. If you feel this way, speak with your GP or midwife for help. Depression can be treated successfully.

## Violence has no place in pregnancy

Violence can harm you, your pregnancy, your baby, and other children. If you're experiencing violence, your midwife or GP can give you confidential support to help you safely plan your birth and look after your family.

## Your appointment at the Women's

We will send you a letter with the details of your pregnancy booking appointment. This appointment may be by video call, phone, or face to face. It will usually happen after you are 18 weeks pregnant.

## Planning your childbirth education

We offer a variety of childbirth education programs. They fill very quickly, so please book online as soon as possible. Childbirth education is free if you have a Medicare card. To book or find out more about our programs, visit [thewomens.org.au/wm-cbe](http://thewomens.org.au/wm-cbe).

## Contacts at the Women's

If you're worried about yourself or your baby contact the hospital on the number below.

You can also go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital if you need to.

### The Royal Women's Hospital

Cnr Grattan Street & Flemington Road  
Parkville VIC 3052  
Tel: (03) 8345 2000

For other enquiries, contact the Women's Welcome Centre or visit our [website](#).

### Women's Welcome Centre

Tel: (03) 8345 3037 or 1800 442 007  
Email: [wwcadmin@thewomens.org.au](mailto:wwcadmin@thewomens.org.au)

Check our website for more on early pregnancy, including these fact sheets:

- [Before your first pregnancy appointment at the Women's](#)
- [Coping with common discomforts of pregnancy](#)
- [Early pregnancy – how to take care of yourself](#)
- [Healthy eating when you're pregnant](#)
- [Nausea and vomiting in pregnancy](#)
- [Pain and bleeding in early pregnancy](#)
- [Unplanned pregnancy](#)

## Do you need an interpreter?



You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

**Disclaimer:** This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your or your baby's healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you or your baby require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.  
© The Royal Women's Hospital 2024.