

REPORTING ON



PRENATAL CARE

Every baby deserves a healthy beginning and you can take steps before your baby is even born to help ensure a great start for your infant. That's why The Empire Plan offers mother and baby the coverage you need.

When your primary coverage is The Empire Plan, the Empire Plan Future Moms Program provides you with special services.



**The Empire
Plan**

For Empire Plan enrollees and for their enrolled dependents, COBRA enrollees with their Empire Plan benefits and Young Adult Option enrollees

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Five Important Steps	2	Feeding Your Baby	11
Take Action to Be Healthy; Early Pregnancy.....	4	Breastfeeding and Your Empire Plan Benefits	12
Prenatal Testing	5	Choosing Your Baby’s Doctor; New Parents	13
Future Moms Program	7	Extended Care: Medical Case Management; Questions & Answers.....	14
High Risk Pregnancy Program; Exercise During Pregnancy	8	Postpartum Depression.....	17
Your Healthy Diet During Pregnancy; Medications and Pregnancy.....	9	Health Care Spending Account.....	19
Skincare Products to Avoid; Childbirth Education Classes	10	Resources.....	20

FIVE IMPORTANT STEPS TO HAVING A HEALTHY BABY

1. Call your doctor

As soon as you think you are pregnant, call your doctor. You can do the most for your baby during the first three months of pregnancy, so try to start your doctor visits as soon as possible.

The Empire Plan covers your maternity care under the Medical/Surgical Program. You may choose a participating or non-participating provider for your maternity care.

2. Call The Empire Plan at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447)

The Empire Plan Hospital Program provides coverage at hospitals or licensed birthing centers. You must call for preadmission certification before maternity and other hospital admissions related to your pregnancy.

3. Enroll in the Future Moms Program

As soon as you know you are pregnant, call 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447) and press or say 2 for the Hospital Program for preadmission certification and to learn about the Future Moms Program. Call early – during the first month of pregnancy, if possible – and tell the representative you’re calling about your pregnancy. The maternity

specialist will ask you some questions to determine if there are any potential concerns.

Questions may include:

- Is this your first pregnancy?
- Have you had problems during previous pregnancies?
- Do you have diabetes?
- Do you get urinary tract infections?

If you choose to participate in the Future Moms Program, you will receive the following:

- A toll-free number you can call for answers to your questions about important topics, such as pregnancy, labor, nursing and postpartum depression. This line is staffed by registered nurses, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- A helpful prenatal care book: *Mayo Clinic Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy*.
- Educational materials to help you handle any unexpected events.
- Screening by a registered nurse for common pregnancy risks like premature delivery or depression.

- Useful tools to help you, your doctor and your Future Moms nurse keep track of your pregnancy and spot possible risks.
- Free online visits with a lactation consultant, counselor or registered dietitian.
- Free phone consultations with a dietitian, pharmacist, lactation consultant, exercise physiologist or licensed behavioral health clinician, if needed.

For more information on the services offered by the Future Moms Program, see page 7.

4. Be informed

Ask your doctor or nurse-midwife, the doctor's nurse and the maternity specialist questions. Community resources and websites listed on the back cover of this publication provide even more information. Make sure you know how you can have a healthy pregnancy and baby.

5. Enroll your baby for coverage

Remember to change from Individual coverage to Family coverage or add your baby to your Family coverage.

If you are an active employee, contact your Health Benefits Administrator within 30 days of your baby's birth.

If you are a retiree, write to the Department of Civil Service Employee Benefits Division, Albany, New York 12239, within 30 days of your baby's birth.*

* *Retirees of Participating Agencies: Call the Health Benefits Administrator at your former agency.*

Participating Provider

If you choose a participating provider (obstetrician, family practice physician or certified nurse-midwife), there are no copayments for prenatal visits, delivery or your six-week checkup after delivery. You pay only your copayment for covered services at participating laboratories.

To locate an Empire Plan participating provider or laboratory, call The Empire Plan toll free at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447) and press or say 1 for the Medical/Surgical Program. Or, visit the NYSHIP Online website at www.cs.ny.gov/employee-benefits and click on Find a Provider. Always check with the provider before you receive services to make sure they participate in The Empire Plan for New York State government employees.

Non-participating Provider

If you choose a non-participating provider (obstetrician, family practice physician or certified nurse-midwife), after the annual deductible is met, The Empire Plan pays 80 percent of the reasonable and customary charges for maternity care up to your coinsurance maximum. You pay the balance, until the coinsurance is met. There are separate charges for services at non-participating laboratories.



TAKE ACTION TO BE HEALTHY

If you become pregnant, or are planning on becoming pregnant, you will need to adjust your lifestyle to ensure that you and your baby are as healthy as possible.

- Get early, regular care. Talk to your doctor about prenatal care, your lifestyle and personal and family medical history. These discussions can help your doctor identify possible risk factors and recommend treatment or lifestyle changes specific to your situation.
- Take a prenatal multivitamin. A good prenatal vitamin will have higher levels of folic acid, which helps protect against congenital disabilities, premature birth, low birth weight, miscarriage and pregnancy complications. Folic acid is also naturally found in orange juice, peanuts, green leafy vegetables, beans, broccoli, asparagus, peas, lentils and enriched grain products.
- Stop smoking. Smoking during pregnancy can lead to low birth weight, preterm birth and stillbirth. Babies of mothers who smoked during pregnancy are more likely to have poor lung development, asthma, respiratory infections or even Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Avoid secondhand smoke; it is just as dangerous.
- Stop drinking alcohol, using illicit drugs and taking prescription and over-the-counter drugs (including herbal supplements) that are not prescribed by a doctor who knows you are pregnant.
- Eat a balanced diet. Your baby is nourished by what you eat, so be sure to include healthy food choices and avoid those with no nutritional value.
- Gain enough weight, but not too much. Health care providers recommend that a woman of normal weight gain 25 to 35 pounds during the course of pregnancy. Ask your doctor how much weight you should gain, based on your weight before pregnancy.

EARLY PREGNANCY

The most common early signs and symptoms of pregnancy might include:

Fatigue

Supporting a pregnancy will take a lot of your energy, especially in the first trimester. It is important to get plenty of rest. Fatigue is related to the high levels of the hormone progesterone. Eating foods rich in protein and iron may help. Remember to take a prenatal vitamin for optimal nutritional support.

Nausea

Although often called morning sickness, nausea during pregnancy can happen at any time. Hormone levels are a contributing factor, including rising levels of the hormones human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) and/or estrogen. Not every woman experiences nausea, so do not be concerned if you are not experiencing this symptom. Try the following to relieve any sickness:

- Eat small, frequent meals. The stomach empties slowly during pregnancy and may not hold a large meal. Avoid spicy, fried and greasy foods.
- Keep crackers at your bedside. Some women find that eating crackers before getting out of bed or moving around can help.
- Some women have aversions to certain smells. Identify the trigger situations and avoid them.
- Try fresh ginger. Make sure to look for items made with real ginger. You can also try grating fresh ginger into a beverage.
- Take your prenatal vitamins with your evening meal or before bed rather than on an empty stomach.

Constipation

During pregnancy, your digestive system may slow down. Although uncomfortable, it is not dangerous and can be managed. Do not take any laxatives unless instructed to do so. Also try these tips:

- Increase your fluid intake.
- Increase your fiber; eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.

- If you're not already exercising, add mild exercise to your daily routine.
- Check with your doctor to see if you can take a stool softener. This medication is usually safe during pregnancy.

Breast Changes

Breast changes are one of the very earliest symptoms in pregnancy. Rising hormone levels can cause breast tissue to become swollen, heavier and sore. While this may be uncomfortable, there is nothing to worry about.

Frequent Urination

For many women, this symptom begins around the sixth or seventh week after conception as the uterus starts to grow. Initially, this may also be due to enlarged ovaries taking up space in the pelvic cavity. This may be bothersome, but not worrisome. If you develop burning with urination, blood in your urine or fever, you must call your doctor.

Cramping/Spotting

A small amount of cramping that resembles menstrual cramps can be normal. Remember your uterus is a muscle and it is working with the developing pregnancy. On occasion, cramping may be accompanied by spotting. Again, spotting may be perfectly normal. However, if at any time you experience heavy, bright red bleeding or severe, constant cramping, please notify your doctor.

Emotions

It is natural to be worried that every twinge is something to be concerned about and you may find yourself very emotional. Try to focus your energy and thoughts on the positives!

Fortunately, these symptoms lessen for many women as they end their first trimester. In the meantime, be sure to incorporate healthy nutritional choices so that you and your baby get the essential daily requirements for optimal health.



PRENATAL TESTING

Prenatal tests are medical tests you receive while you are pregnant. They help your doctor monitor your health during pregnancy and the health of your developing baby. Some prenatal tests are given to all pregnant women. These include blood pressure checks and blood and urine tests.

Your doctor will listen to your baby's heartbeat at each visit (beginning when your baby's heart is developed enough to be heard – usually by about 12 or 13 weeks). After about 20 weeks, your doctor will begin measuring your abdomen to follow your baby's growth. A normal heartbeat and growth rate are important signs that your baby is developing properly. Prenatal care also usually includes tests for the following:

- Hepatitis B, syphilis, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases that could be dangerous to a developing baby.
- Presence of antibodies in your blood to show immunity to rubella (German measles) and varicella (chickenpox), which can cause congenital disabilities if you are infected during pregnancy.
- Anemia (low red blood cell count) to make sure you are getting enough iron. Too little iron could cause you to feel especially tired and possibly increase your risk of delivering your baby too soon.
- Your blood type, including whether or not you carry a protein called the Rh factor. Women who do not have the Rh factor are considered Rh negative and usually need a series of injections to protect their babies from a possible blood problem.

- Cancer of the cervix. This is ruled out with a pap smear.
- Bacteria in your urine, which could indicate an infection that can pose a serious risk for both you and your baby.
- Sugar in your urine, which can be a sign of diabetes. Your doctor may suggest additional tests if sugar shows up in your urine.
- Protein in your urine, which can indicate a urinary tract infection or, later in pregnancy, a pregnancy-related condition that includes high blood pressure. Your doctor may suggest additional tests if your urine has protein in it.
- Gestational diabetes. A glucose tolerance test that is usually performed at about 28 weeks identifies this condition.
- Presence of Group B streptococcus (GBS). If the bacteria is present (common for many women and considered a normal part of a woman's reproductive system), you may receive treatment during labor to protect the baby from becoming infected during birth.
- Cystic fibrosis (CF), an inherited disease that can severely affect breathing and digestion.

Your doctor may perform other prenatal tests over the course of your pregnancy, depending on your and your partner's medical and family history. These tests can include a blood screening for alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) given between 16 and 18 weeks of pregnancy. This screening determines a baby's risk for certain congenital disabilities, including Down syndrome.

One or more ultrasounds may also be offered. An ultrasound uses sound waves to create a picture of the baby and helps the doctor date the pregnancy and follow the baby's growth and development. This test also helps determine the presence of more than one baby, the level of fluid around the baby, the health and location of the placenta and the sex of the baby.

Your doctor may suggest more tests, including amniocentesis, a test of the fluid surrounding the baby that detects certain genetic abnormalities; chorionic villus sampling (CVS), a sampling of the baby's tissue from the fingerlike projections in

the placenta; and/or a fetal nonstress test that measures the frequency of a baby's movement in the womb and how the baby's heart rate relates to the movement. If you have any questions about prenatal tests or the terms used here, discuss them with your doctor. If you are unsure whether a test will be covered, call The Empire Plan toll free at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447) before you receive the test.

Empire Plan Coverage

The Empire Plan covers in full all routine pre- and postnatal visits and urinalyses received from Empire Plan participating obstetricians/gynecologists, family practice physicians or certified nurse-midwives. Additional testing, based on medical necessity, is also covered, but may be subject to a copayment. The Empire Plan Basic Medical Program covers services received from non-participating providers. (See your *General Information Book* and *Empire Plan Certificate* for more information about the Empire Plan Basic Medical Program.)



FUTURE MOMS PROGRAM

Pregnancy is an exciting and special time, but it can also be a little overwhelming. As a part of your health plan, you can sign up for the Future Moms Program – a no-cost pregnancy support program designed just for moms-to-be. Whether this is your first pregnancy or your third, the Future Moms Program can help you along the way.

As soon as your doctor confirms your pregnancy, call The Empire Plan and notify us that you are pregnant. This call is important. When you call, your admission to the hospital to deliver your baby will be precertified and you will be covered at the highest level. You will also be contacted by a maternity specialist who will help you enroll in the Future Moms Program. Enrollment is easy and will give you access to maternity specialists who can answer your questions.

When you sign up for the Future Moms Program you receive:

- Your own maternal health coach
- Access to a registered nurse helpline 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Helpful and informative materials throughout your pregnancy on topics including your baby's development and growth, fitness and nutrition and infant safety

Initial Assessment

At the beginning of the program, a nurse will ask questions to check risk factors. If you are identified as high risk for preterm labor, additional support and education are available through the High Risk Pregnancy Program (see page 8).

Shortly after you join the Future Moms Program, you'll receive a welcome kit in the mail. This packet includes:

- A Future Moms welcome letter including a toll-free line staffed with representatives who are available 24/7 for help with all your pregnancy-related questions.
- The book, *Mayo Clinic Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy*.
- A Maternity Care Diary, which will help you track milestones during your pregnancy.

28 Weeks

Around week 28 of your pregnancy, the Future Moms Program nurse will call to discuss your most recent checkup, confirm that you have had the appropriate tests and screenings and answer any questions you have about prenatal tests, delivery options, caring for your baby or any other health concerns. After this phone call, you will receive another packet with helpful information about your third trimester and preparing for labor.

After Delivery

Your Future Moms Program nurse will call you two to four weeks after your delivery to congratulate you on the birth of your child and check on how you and the baby are doing. Your nurse can also offer additional support if you have the “baby blues” or are suffering from postpartum depression. After this call, you will receive a birth kit that includes information on infant care and home safety.

Breastfeeding Support

If you have any questions or need support with breastfeeding, help is just a click away. Using Future Moms with Breastfeeding Support on LiveHealth Online, you can have video visits with a certified lactation consultant, a counselor or a registered dietitian at no extra cost to you. Using your smartphone, tablet or computer you can make appointments with professionals who will provide personalized support to help you learn about breastfeeding techniques, milk production, baby hunger cues, foods to avoid, nutrition and more.

Sign up for this program at livehealthonline.com or download the free LiveHealth Online mobile app. Once you create an account, select Future Moms with Breastfeeding Support to view the available appointments, which are offered seven days a week and evenings, too.

Call at Any Time

Call the Future Moms Program 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447). Press or say 2 for the Hospital Program. Spanish-speaking nurses are available and we have access to a language line. You also can use TTY/TTD services. Call 1-800-257-6494 or call the relay center at 1-800-828-1140.

Call your health care provider for a nonemergency medical condition or illness. If you have a medical emergency, call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.

HIGH RISK PREGNANCY PROGRAM

The High Risk Pregnancy Program is a component of the Future Moms Program that is designed specifically for women who have been identified as high risk. Like other elements of the Future Moms Program, participation is voluntary.

If you are identified as high risk and elect to participate in the High Risk Pregnancy Program, you will be contacted at least once a month by your Future Moms Program nurse for ongoing assessments.

This additional support is tailored to your individual needs. The timing of these calls will be based on the severity of the issue(s) and control of symptoms and/or risk factors.

EXERCISE DURING PREGNANCY

Moderate exercise for at least 30 minutes on most, if not all, days of your pregnancy is recommended unless there is a medical reason to avoid exercise, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). Exercise during pregnancy can benefit both you and your baby by:

- Preventing high blood pressure and gestational diabetes, which sometimes develop during pregnancy.
- Building stamina for labor and delivery.
- Easing common discomforts like constipation, backache, fatigue and varicose veins.
- Enhancing well-being and promoting early recovery and weight loss after labor and delivery.
- Relieving some emotional strains after your baby's birth, when some women are affected by postpartum depression, or "baby blues."



Always be mindful of your safety during exercise and take the following precautions:

- Discuss your plans for exercise with your doctor before you begin.
- Avoid activities that put you at high risk for injury, such as downhill skiing, horseback riding or contact sports.
- Keep your heart rate at a moderate level; a good rule of thumb to follow is to make sure you are able to speak comfortably during exercise. If you cannot say more than a few words without becoming out of breath, lower your exercise intensity.
- After your first trimester, avoid exercise that requires you to lay flat on your back for extended periods of time, which can reduce blood flow to the uterus.
- Avoid overheating and stay hydrated before, during and after exercise.
- Make sure you do a full cool down and stretch thoroughly after exercise.

Brisk walking, swimming, jogging and dancing are usually safe and effective forms of exercise during pregnancy. Or, try prenatal yoga or aerobics classes designed for pregnant women.

YOUR HEALTHY DIET DURING PREGNANCY

It's important to eat smart and make healthy food choices to support your baby's growth during pregnancy. Try to eat foods from each of the five food groups every day. They provide important nutrients that you and your baby need.

In general, most women need around 300 extra calories per day during pregnancy. However, the exact amount of extra calories you need depends on your weight before pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider to learn more about a healthy eating plan that's right for you. Be sure to watch serving sizes and remember fatty foods (like doughnuts and chips) and sweets (like sodas, cookies and candy) don't give your baby enough of what they need to grow.

Healthy Eating Tips

Meals: Eat four to six smaller meals a day instead of three bigger ones to help relieve the heartburn and discomfort you may feel as your baby grows larger.

Snacks: Cheese, yogurt, fruit and vegetables are satisfying, healthy snacks. Peanut butter and nuts are also good if you aren't allergic to them.

Liquids: Drink at least six to eight glasses of water, juice or milk every day.

Vitamins: Take a multivitamin or prenatal vitamin every day. Ask your health care provider if you also need to take an iron or calcium supplement.

Caffeine: Limit your caffeine to 200 milligrams daily (the amount in one 12-ounce cup of coffee). Caffeine in coffee depends on the brand you drink and how it's made, so check the label on the package, or ask at your coffee shop. Try decaffeinated coffee, which has a smaller amount of caffeine. Caffeine is also found in tea, chocolate, soda and some over-the-counter medicine, so read labels to learn how much caffeine you're getting.

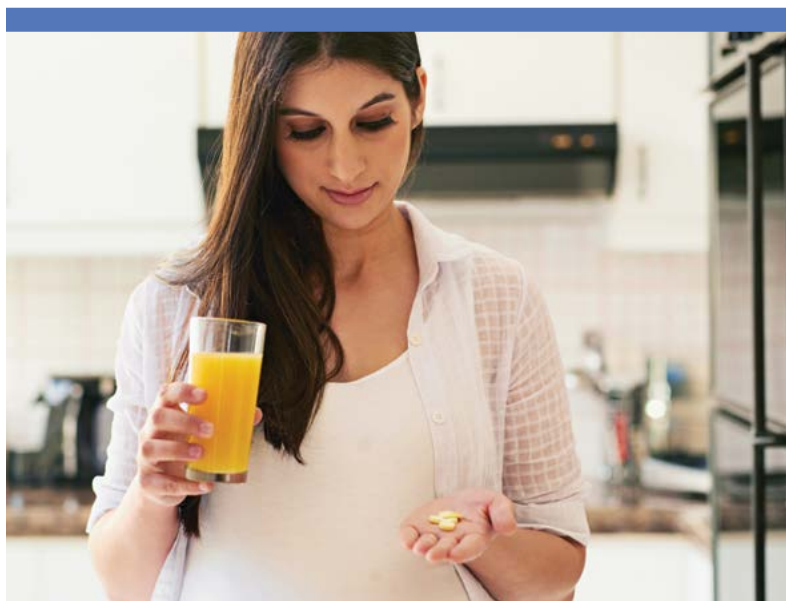
Foods to Avoid

- Raw fish, especially raw shellfish.
- Soft-scrambled or runny eggs and foods made with raw or lightly cooked eggs.
- Unpasteurized juices such as apple cider.

- Raw sprouts, especially alfalfa sprouts.
- Unpasteurized milk and any foods made from it.
- Unpasteurized soft cheeses, such as brie, feta, camembert, roquefort and queso blanco.
- Herbal supplements and some herbal teas.
- Fish high in mercury, including shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish. It's okay to eat up to 12 ounces a week of fish containing small amounts of mercury. These 12 ounces can include shrimp, salmon, pollock, catfish and canned light tuna. (Eat only 6 ounces of albacore tuna.)
- Raw or undercooked meat, poultry, seafood and hot dogs. Deli meats (such as ham and bologna) can cause food poisoning. Avoid or heat them before eating.
- Refrigerated pâtés, meat spreads or smoked seafood. Canned and shelf-stable versions are safe.

MEDICATIONS AND PREGNANCY

Prescription drugs related to prenatal care are generally covered by the Plan at the applicable copayment up to a 90-day supply when filled at network, mail service, specialty and non-network pharmacies. For questions about your prescription coverage, call The Empire Plan toll free at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447) and press or say 4 for the Prescription Drug Program.



SKINCARE PRODUCTS TO AVOID

While most products are completely safe, a handful of skincare ingredients are best avoided while pregnant or breastfeeding.

Retinoids: Retinoids are a type of vitamin A praised for reducing wrinkles and improving skin tone. However, studies have shown that high doses of vitamin A during pregnancy can be harmful to an unborn child. Oral retinoids, such as isotretinoin (Accutane, an acne treatment), are known to cause congenital disabilities.

On the label: Differin (adapalene), Retin-A, Renova (tretinoin), Retinoic acid, Retinol, Retinyl linoleate, Retinyl palmitate, Tazorac and Avage (tazarotene).

Salicylic acid: This mild acid is used to treat certain skin disorders, including acne. BHA, or beta hydroxy acid, is a form of salicylic acid. High doses of salicylic acid have been shown to cause congenital disabilities and various pregnancy complications. **Note:** Alpha hydroxy acids, sometimes listed as AHAs, glycolic acid, or lactic acid, are safe.

On the label: Salicylic acid, Beta hydroxy acid (BHA).

Soy: Although generally considered safe, soy has estrogenic effects, which can worsen the “mask of pregnancy” (dark splotches on facial skin, also known as melasma or chloasma).

On the label: Lethicin, Phosphatidylcholine, soy, textured vegetable protein (TVP).

CHILDBIRTH EDUCATION CLASSES

In the sixth or seventh month of your pregnancy, you and a partner may want to take a childbirth education class. These classes usually run up to eight weeks and may include:

- Information about what to expect during pregnancy, labor and delivery.
- Suggestions of proper diet and exercise.
- Relaxation and breathing techniques to use during labor and delivery.
- The best support your partner can give you during delivery.
- A chance to meet and spend time with other expecting parents.

Taking a childbirth education class can reduce your stress by preparing you for pregnancy, labor and delivery. Contact your doctor’s office, local hospital or birthing center for more information and to make a reservation.

Note: Any charges for these services will not be reimbursed by The Empire Plan.





FEEDING YOUR BABY

The most precious gift you can give your baby is a healthy start in life. Deciding whether to breast or bottle feed your baby is a big decision. Consider the pros and cons of each and discuss this decision with both your baby's pediatrician and your own doctor before your baby is born.

Babies fed either breast milk or formula can grow and develop normally, and each offers advantages. Whichever you choose, feeding time is a wonderful opportunity to bond with, as well as nourish your baby and to stimulate intellectual, social and emotional development.

If you enroll in the Future Moms Program, breastfeeding support is available by using Future Moms with Breastfeeding Support on LiveHealth Online at no extra cost to you. See page 7 for more information about the Future Moms Program.

Breast Milk

Breast milk is a complete form of nutrition for almost all babies and has extra ingredients that cannot be duplicated. However, there can be cases when breastfeeding is not always the best option. Discuss this decision with your baby's pediatrician and your own doctor.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends feeding a baby breast milk exclusively (no water, juice, nonhuman milk, formula or food) for the first six months of a baby's life, and to continue breastfeeding throughout the baby's first year.

Benefits of Breast Milk

Breast milk contains fatty acids to promote brain development, antibodies and other substances that help protect a baby from illness. It naturally provides ideal amounts of protein, sugar, fat, most vitamins, growth factors, hormones and additional nourishment that a baby needs for healthy growth and development. And, as the infant grows, breast milk changes to adapt to the child's changing needs.

Breast milk is usually easily digested by a baby, and may reduce gas and discomfort. Studies show that babies fed breast milk may have a lower incidence of vomiting, diarrhea, ear infections and other types of infections. Breastfeeding also promotes correct development of the jaw, teeth and speaking abilities. And, breast milk is almost always available and free.

Breastfeeding can also benefit the mother, who may lose weight gained during pregnancy more easily, have less chance of developing anemia after delivery and a lower risk of developing certain diseases later in life. Breastfeeding can also help reduce the risk of uterine bleeding after delivery by releasing hormones that can help mothers feel calm and relaxed, which may help protect from postpartum depression.

Formula

Formula is a safe and healthy alternative to breast milk. A variety of formulas are available and each offers essential nourishment and different compositions for the digestive and dietary needs of babies.

Certain formulas are very similar to breast milk. Some mothers combine breast milk and formula feeding, which benefits the baby by providing unique nutrients present in breast milk and enables the mother and other caregivers to take advantage of the benefits of formula feeding.

If you decide to feed your baby formula, be sure the one you choose provides DHA and ARA; these nutrients support healthy brain and eye development.

Your formula should also be fortified with calcium, iron, easy-to-digest protein and a healthy level of calories and vitamins and minerals. These are all vital to the baby's health and development.

Ask your pediatrician for a recommendation about which formula is best for your baby.

BREASTFEEDING AND YOUR EMPIRE PLAN BENEFITS

If you make the decision to breastfeed your baby, you are covered for the purchase of one double electric breast pump following birth. Breast pumps are available for purchase at no cost to you when you use a Home Care Advocacy Program (HCAP) participating supplier. Current breast pump suppliers are:

- Byram Healthcare: 1-877-902-9726 or www.byramhealthcare.com
- Edgepark: 1-888-394-5375 or www.edgepark.com
- McKesson: 1-844-727-6667 or www.mckesson.com
- Medline: 1-800-633-5463 or www.medline.com

Check to see if a lactation consultant is available at the hospital where you plan to deliver. You are covered for comprehensive breastfeeding support and counseling at no cost during pregnancy and/or the postpartum period.

If you enroll in the Future Moms Program, breastfeeding support is available by using Future Moms with Breastfeeding Support on LiveHealth Online at no extra cost to you. See page 7 for more information about the Future Moms Program.



CHOOSING YOUR BABY'S DOCTOR

Choosing a pediatrician is an important part of planning for a new baby. This is the doctor who will care for your child as he or she grows and develops.

A good time to start looking is about six or seven months into your pregnancy. Ask relatives and friends for recommendations. Talk to parents in your neighborhood or get referrals from your own doctor. Request to meet the doctor and staff who work at your pediatrician's office and also request a tour.

Follow this checklist of questions when choosing your baby's doctor:

- Is the doctor an Empire Plan participating provider?
- At what hospitals does the doctor admit patients?
- Are these hospitals in The Empire Plan network?
- Who covers for the doctor if they are unavailable?
- Are the doctors who cover for the doctor affiliated with the same hospitals? Are they board certified?
- What is the physician's pediatric background? Are they board certified? Does the doctor have a subspecialty if your child has special medical needs?
- What are the office hours?
- When is the best time to call with routine questions?
- Is emergency coverage available 24 hours a day, including weekends?
- How long does it take to get a nonemergency appointment in this office?
- Do you and the doctor have similar views on sensitive topics and parenting issues (such as breastfeeding, immunizations, single parenthood, alternative medicine, circumcision and co-sleeping)?
- Are waiting rooms and exam rooms clean and engaging for you and your child?
- How friendly and helpful is the office staff?

NEW PARENTS

Many new parents may have never cared for a baby until their own is born. A baby can be exciting and unfamiliar at the same time, and it's normal to be nervous about parenting. You have a vital role in the health and well-being of your baby. The following are helpful tips to get you off to the right start:

- Share the tasks of feeding, changing and caring for your baby so that both parents can get rest.
- Hold, cuddle and play with your baby. This helps both you and your baby thrive and form a strong bond.
- Smile, talk and laugh with your baby. Studies show that a baby can hear your voice while in the womb and can recognize parents within the first week of life.
- Remember to keep your baby's crib, bassinet, stroller (or any place your baby may sleep) free of stuffed toys and/or blankets. Overloading these items increases the risk of SIDS or suffocation.
- Childproof the nursery, bathroom, kitchen, fireplace – any area of your house that poses a threat to your baby – and check the safety of any baby furniture or gadgets (cribs, high chairs, strollers, swings, play yards) that you purchase or are given secondhand. There are a number of websites with baby product recalls and reviews, including www.safekids.org, www.cpsc.gov and www.jpma.org. **Note:** It is not recommended to use a secondhand car seat.
- Introduce new foods into your baby's diet as your doctor advises you. Be aware of food allergies in your family that your baby may have inherited.
- Dress your baby appropriately for the weather. Make sure your baby's room is the right temperature (65°F is ideal).
- Take your baby out for walks or activities. Babies love the sights and sounds of the outdoors and benefit from new experiences and stimuli.

EXTENDED CARE: MEDICAL CASE MANAGEMENT

Medical case management is a voluntary program to help identify and coordinate covered services you or your baby may need once your baby is born. Call The Empire Plan toll free at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447) and press or say 1 for the Medical/Surgical Program to voluntarily enroll for this service.

Some serious conditions, such as neonatal (newborn) complications, may require extended care. If your baby needs this type of care, you may be faced with many decisions about treatment plans and facilities. The Benefits Management Program can provide information that may help you make the best possible choice based on the patient's situation.

Preadmission certification and concurrent review help the Benefits Management Program determine if medical case management would be appropriate. If the Benefits Management Program decides that this service could help you, your baby or any covered family member, a nurse coordinator who is familiar with Plan benefits and local and regional health care resources will contact you. The nurse will meet with you and your family to discuss the patient's medical situation.

Your acceptance of this service is voluntary. With your written consent, the nurse and your attending physician will identify treatment options covered under The Empire Plan so that you and your family have the information available to make the best medical decisions possible. The nurse will also identify any community resources that may be available.

When you accept medical case management, inpatient services will be coordinated by the Empire Plan Hospital Program and outpatient services will be coordinated by the Medical/Surgical Program.

Even if you do not elect to participate in the Medical Case Management Program, always call The Empire Plan and choose the Hospital Program within 48 hours or as soon as reasonably possible if you are admitted to the hospital. Anyone can make the call, but you are responsible for ensuring that The Empire Plan is notified. You will pay a

higher share of the cost if you do not follow the Empire Plan Benefits Management Program procedures.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Is it safe for me to use household cleaning products while I'm pregnant?

Some cleaning agents may cause congenital disabilities after prolonged direct contact with your skin. Be careful not to use cleaners with strong fumes, like oven cleaners. Wear gloves and facial protection and work in a well-ventilated area. Read labels or contact the manufacturer to learn more about a product's safety. You can also call your doctor to check if the substance is dangerous for pregnant women.

Will my dental work pose a risk to my unborn baby?

Routine dental work should continue throughout your pregnancy and should not cause concern. In fact, delaying needed dental work could be risky. Badly decayed teeth or impacted wisdom teeth can cause infection that could spread and endanger both you and your baby. When your body is fighting to stay healthy, byproducts and chemicals are produced and travel through your bloodstream. If these chemicals reach your uterus, they may cause premature labor. Research suggests that women who have gum disease or periodontitis may be seven times more likely to have a baby born too early and too small.

Be sure to tell your dentist or hygienist you are pregnant so necessary precautions are taken. Avoid X-rays unless they are absolutely necessary.

Is there any reason to limit fish intake during my pregnancy?

Yes. Certain types of fish may be contaminated with high levels of mercury or industrial pollutants that are harmful to your unborn baby. Avoid eating swordfish, shark, king mackerel or tilefish, which can contain high levels of mercury. It's okay to eat up to 12 ounces a week of fish that contains a small amount of mercury. The 12 ounces can include shrimp, salmon, pollock, catfish and canned light tuna (six ounces for albacore tuna).

Is touching raw meat or cleaning my cat's litter box safe during pregnancy?

A parasite that causes toxoplasmosis is found in raw meat and cat feces; it can cause severe brain damage in the fetus. Pregnant women should practice good hygiene when handling raw meat, avoid contact with sandboxes and litter boxes and wear gloves when gardening.

I'm 36 years old. Is pregnancy safe after age 35?

While advances in medical care can help women over age 35 have safer pregnancies than in the past, there is a higher risk of pregnancy complications. These include high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, placental problems, miscarriage or stillbirth, or having a baby with a congenital disability like Down syndrome.

Good prenatal care is especially important in order to minimize risks and improve your chances for a healthy pregnancy and child.

I am a victim of domestic violence. Where can I go for help?

Call the New York State Domestic Violence hotline toll free at 1-800-942-6906 for the hotline number of your local domestic violence program. And, talk with your doctor. Your baby's health is at stake.

If a woman is HIV positive, will her baby be born HIV positive too?

New drugs can reduce the risk of HIV-positive mothers passing the virus onto their babies to two percent or less, compared to about 25 percent for untreated mothers. It is important for a woman considering pregnancy or who is already pregnant to have an HIV blood test. The New York State AIDS Hotline provides information about free anonymous testing. Call toll free 1-800-541-2437; for a Spanish-speaking representative, call toll free 1-800-233-7432.

It is better to be tested for HIV during pregnancy than to wait until delivery. If a woman without prenatal HIV test results declines HIV testing during delivery, hospitals are required to conduct expedited HIV testing on her newborn. Treatments for mom during or shortly after delivery can reduce transmission from mother to baby by up to two-thirds. If you are HIV positive, do not breastfeed your baby. HIV can be carried in breast milk.



Is it possible for me to transfer a sexually transmitted disease (STD) to my unborn baby?

Sexually transmitted diseases in pregnant women may cause spontaneous abortion or complications in your newborn, including pneumonia, eye infections and permanent neurological damage. If you think you have a sexually transmitted disease, see your doctor as soon as possible. Most STDs are treated easily. The earlier a woman seeks treatment, the less likely she is to pass the disease on to her baby.

How can I prevent exposing my baby to dangerous levels of lead?

A home built before 1978 may contain high lead levels that can be dangerous to pregnant women and children. Be aware of lead paint on surfaces such as windowsills, railings and stair edges, especially at a height that a child may be able to chew. Before renovating or buying an older home, consider testing the painted surfaces for lead. Your local health department can recommend experts.

If lead is found, hire an expert who follows safety precautions (such as blocking off the room) to remove it. Stay out of the home until the paint is gone and a thorough cleanup is completed. Afterwards, make sure painted surfaces are in good condition, especially those your baby can touch.

To minimize levels of lead in tap water, the Environmental Protection Agency recommends running your tap water until it is cold – at least 60 seconds – and a minimum of two minutes if the tap has not been used for more than six hours. Use only cold tap water for drinking, cooking and making infant formula. Call your local health department or your doctor if you have questions.

I have heard of babies dying from SIDS. What is it and how can I reduce my baby's risk?

SIDS is Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, the diagnosis for the sudden unexplained death of an infant under one year of age. SIDS is the leading cause of death in infants between one month and one year of age. Most SIDS deaths occur between the ages of two and four months. While there is no way to predict which babies will die from SIDS, there are ways to lower your baby's risk:

- Put your baby to sleep on his or her back (unless advised otherwise by your doctor), even for naps.
- Place your baby on a firm mattress and not a soft surface (like a waterbed).
- Do not use fluffy pillows or comforters, or put soft pillow-like toys in your baby's crib.
- Keep your baby's face and head uncovered during sleep.
- Do not let your baby get too warm during sleep.
- Take your baby for regular well-baby checkups and routine immunizations.
- Do not smoke during pregnancy or allow smoking around your baby. Smoking during pregnancy has been associated with an increased risk of SIDS. See page 20 for smoking cessation resources.

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

For most women, the birth of a child is a time of joy and happiness. At the same time, 50 to 80 percent of new mothers experience symptoms of postpartum depression, or the “baby blues” during the first week after delivery. These feelings of moodiness, depression, anxiety, irritability and fatigue, sometimes attributed to after-delivery hormonal changes, typically last only a few days and are gone within two weeks of the birth.

However, for some new mothers, these feelings are more intense and do not subside. This is a more serious form of depression that may develop at any time within a year of childbirth. Women with postpartum depression can experience any number of symptoms, the most common of which are extreme sadness, crying, guilt, feelings of hopelessness and/or worthlessness, difficulty concentrating, fatigue, changes in eating habits and insomnia. In more extreme cases, fear of harming the baby (though this rarely happens) and suicidal thoughts can occur.

What Causes Postpartum Depression?

Most experts agree that it is the result of many factors. Evidence suggests that changes in hormones after delivery such as estrogen, progesterone and thyroid are involved. Complications during labor and delivery, having a “difficult baby,” stress and lack of emotional support also may contribute to the problem. In addition, there are factors unrelated to delivery that place the mother at risk for developing postpartum depression. These include a personal or family history of depression or mood disorders, relationship problems, unemployment of the mother or her partner or other stressful events during the preceding year.



What should you do if you think you are suffering from postpartum depression?

First, don't be afraid to let your doctor know what you've been experiencing. Unfortunately, you may be one of as many as 50 percent of women with this problem who never acknowledge the symptoms or seek treatment and therefore suffer needlessly. Once your doctor is aware of the problem, he or she can help you determine the best form of treatment for you. This may include counseling from the physician or a mental health professional, involvement in a postpartum depression support group, medication or a combination of these approaches.

Remember that you may get valuable support by telling your partner or a relative or friend how you're feeling. Finally, take care of yourself. Eat well, get plenty of rest, try to exercise every day, ask for help from others and spend time with friends.

More About Postpartum Depression

There is helpful information about postpartum depression on the customized Empire Plan Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program website at www.achievesolutions.net/empireplan. Enter “postpartum depression” in the search tool to access self-help questionnaires, articles and other resources regarding postpartum depression.

If you think you or a loved one is suffering from postpartum depression, or if you have questions, call The Empire Plan toll free at 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447) and press or say 3 for the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Program.

The Empire Plan NurseLineSM

You can call 1-877-7-NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447) and press or say 5 to reach an experienced registered nurse, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can call the same number to reach The Empire Plan’s NurseLine’s Health Information Library. Enter PIN number 335 and a four-digit topic code from The Empire Plan NurseLine brochure. If you do not have your brochure, ask the NurseLine nurse to send you one.



HEALTH CARE SPENDING ACCOUNT (HCSACCOUNT)

The Health Care Spending Account (HCSAccount) helps State employees pay for health-related expenses with tax-free dollars. This includes unreimbursed expenses (such as copayments and deductibles) for medical, hospital, laboratory, prescription drug, dental, vision and hearing services. You have an opportunity to enroll each fall during the HCSAccount open enrollment period.

Before participating in the HCSAccount program, you should carefully consider what your eligible expenses might be. Reviewing your expenses from previous years can help you determine how much to contribute. You can set aside \$100 to \$2,600* per year in an HCSAccount. Under federal law, any money that you put into your HCSAccount must be used for expenses incurred during the plan year in which it was contributed. Unless you experience a qualifying event, you cannot change the amount of your HCSAccount annual election.

You may be eligible to enroll in a HCSAccount if you are designated Management/Confidential or are represented by CSEA, PEF, NYSCOPBA, Council 82, PBANYS, District Council 37, PBA, NYSPIA, or UUP. Employees of the Legislature and Unified Court System are also eligible to participate. Additional eligibility requirements apply; visit the Flex Spending Account website at www.flexspend.ny.gov for additional information.

If you are an employee of Participating Employers or of a Participating Agency, ask your Health Benefits Administrator if a similar benefit is available to you.



Dependent Care Advantage Account (DCAAccount)

A Dependent Care Advantage Account, or DCAAccount, is available to all executive branch state agency employees. Part-time employees are eligible as long as their biweekly paychecks can support their DCAA deductions.

Will you need child care for your baby? The DCAAccount could help save you money by allowing you to pay for your child's care with pre-tax dollars. Under this program, you may set aside up to \$5,000 in pre-tax salary for eligible child care. See your Health Benefits Administrator for details or visit www.flexspend.ny.gov.

If you are an employee of a Participating Employer or Participating Agency ask your Health Benefits Administrator if a similar benefit is available to you.

* The maximum contribution may be subject to change annually since it is indexed to inflation.

RESOURCES

Alcoholism and Substance Abuse

NYS Addiction Helpline
1-877-846-7369

Cancer

National Cancer Institute
1-800-4-CANCER
(1-800-422-6237)

Diabetes

American Diabetes Association
1-800-DIABETES
(1-800-342-2383)

Domestic Violence

NYS Domestic Violence
Hotline, NYS Office for
the Prevention of
Domestic Violence
1-800-942-6906

Environmental Health

NYS Department of Health
1-800-458-1158

Food and Nutrition

Growing Up Healthy Hotline,
NYS Department of Health
1-800-522-5006

Heart Health

American Heart Association
1-800-AHA-USA-1
(1-800-242-8721)

HIV/AIDS

NYS AIDS Information Hotline,
NYS Department of Health
1-800-541-2437
In Spanish:
1-800-233-7432

Lead Exposure

National Lead Information
Center Hotline,
U.S. Environmental
Protection Agency
1-800-424-LEAD
(1-800-424-5323)

Oral Care

American Dental Association
312-440-2500

Pregnancy and Birth Defects

March of Dimes
1-888-MODIMES
(1-888-663-4637)

Smoking Cessation

New York State
Smokers' Quitline
1-866-NY-QUITS
(1-866-697-8487)
www.nysmokefree.com

This *Reporting On* is based in part on information from:

- American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org
- American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
www.acog.org
- American Dental Association
www.ada.org
- American Medical Association
www.ama-assn.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov
- March of Dimes
www.marchofdimes.com
- National Institutes of Health
www.nih.gov
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
www.epa.gov
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration
www.fda.gov
- WebMD
www.webmd.com

This issue of *Reporting On* is for information purposes only. Please see your doctor for diagnosis and treatment. Read your plan materials for complete information about coverage.

New York State Department of Civil Service, Employee Benefits Division, Albany, New York 12239 • www.cs.ny.gov

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