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The health-group works mainly on AIDS. This book has been created as part of a health-group project to prevent the transmission of HIV from a mother to her child.

प्रयास

Becoming a mother...

Dr. Sanjeevani Kulkarni

Illustrations : Madhuri Purandare
Translation : Abhijit Randive



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To avoid transmission of infection from a mother to her child

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Becoming a mother...



Dr. Sanjeevani Kulkarni

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What can you see in the picture next to this page?

A woman is vomiting. When a woman vomits, even a small child says, “She is going to have a baby.”

In fact, vomiting does not have anything to do with being pregnant. However, many women do feel sick or vomit during the first three months of pregnancy.

Pregnant women experience many other things besides this. Missing periods is one major thing. Women also need to urinate more often; at times, an abnormal taste is felt in the mouth; breasts feel heavier. Sometimes, one feels the urge to eat specific items of food, while the idea of even looking at other items is disgusting.





- Even if you get a vomiting sensation, do eat something after every two hours. The sensation could be more severe in the morning, so eat something dry for breakfast (like toast, biscuit, bhaakari), chewing it well. Drink plenty of water. Do not eat oily, fried food. If you feel constipated, drink plenty of water. Make sure that you eat fruits, leafy vegetables and other vegetables. Take some light exercise, such as walking.
- Drink hot milk at night if you like it. This will help relieve the nausea. This will also benefit the growth of your baby. However, if you are getting a burning sensation in the stomach, drink cold milk.
- If there is bleeding during motions or dizziness or if there is vaginal bleeding, see the doctor immediately.

During the first three months, it is not possible to make out that a woman is pregnant by just looking at her. In the next three months, it becomes slowly evident. And, what about the last three months? Do you really need us to tell you that?

In the first three months of pregnancy the baby achieves the form of a body; but how big is it? Very small, like a tiny doll. No x-ray checks should be made during this time. No medicine should be taken without consulting a doctor. It could adversely affect the baby's growth.

In the next three months, the baby starts moving its body, its hands; its size increases as well. In the sixth month, even someone who is pregnant for the first time can feel the movement.

From the seventh month, the baby grows even bigger, and so does the mother's stomach. It develops stretch marks.





Regular checks are important during pregnancy.
One should visit a health clinic for the same.





When and how often should one visit a health clinic?

- Firstly, as soon as you miss your period then, once every month, till the seventh month; once every fifteen days, from the seventh month to the ninth month; once every week, after the ninth month.

What checks are made on such visits?

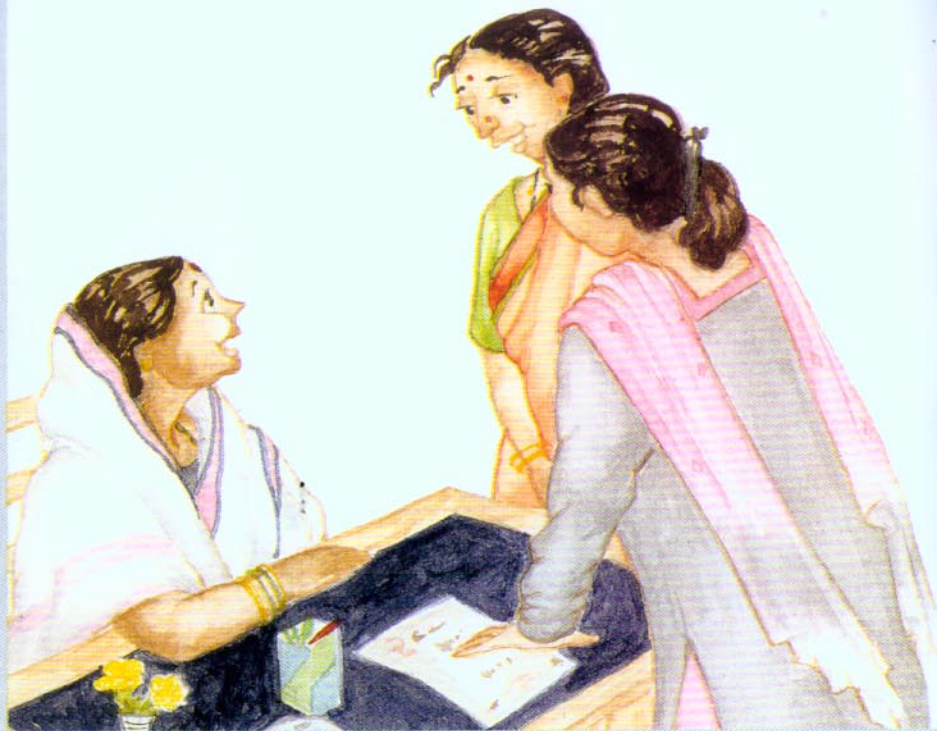
- The size of the tummy is of course checked, to gauge the growth of the baby; besides, it is checked whether the weight growth is proper, and whether there is any swelling of the feet. Blood pressure is also checked.

When should the tetanus immunization be done?

- The tetanus vaccine should be given in the seventh and in the eighth month, (with about a month's interval). This is necessary to make sure that neither the baby nor the mother develops tetanus after childbirth.

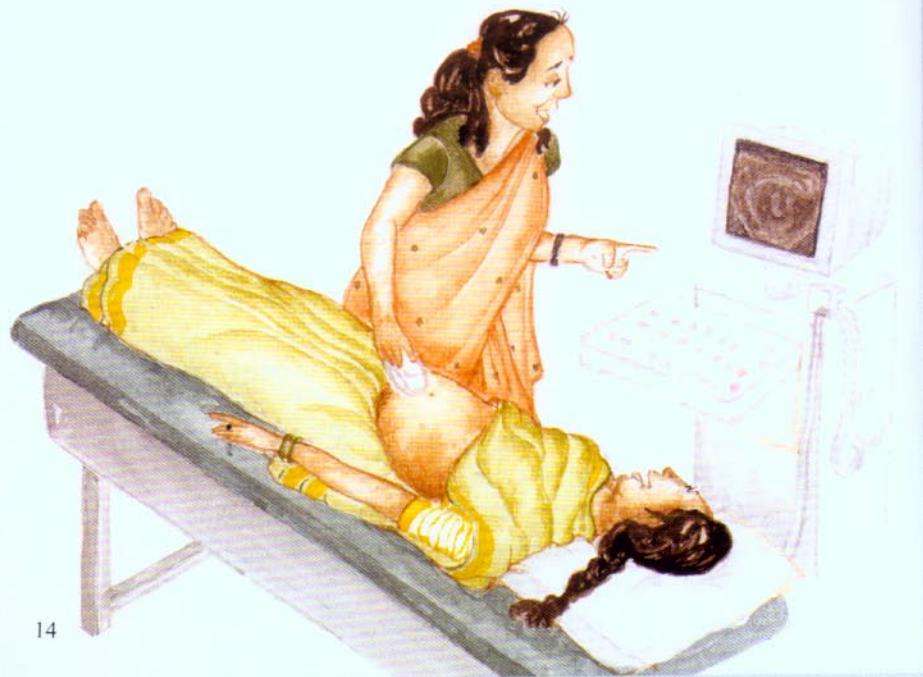
A sonography (also known as an ultrasound scan) is useful to check whether the baby's heartbeat is regular, whether its growth is normal, etc. This should be done at least twice during pregnancy.





Would it be a natural childbirth or would it require an operation?

- If there are no other complications during the pregnancy, the childbirth is typically natural. However, a surgery may be necessary if, at the time of the birth, the baby is suffocating, if the labour pains stop, if the baby's heartbeats slow down or if the vaginal passage is too small for the baby to come out.
- An operation is necessary if the baby is lying horizontally in the womb, if it is laid with its feet towards the vaginal passage and if this is the first childbirth for the woman, if there has been bleeding before the childbirth, or if the uterus has been operated upon earlier.



Why should a Sonography be done?



Sonography (Ultrasound scan): Although not available to most Indian women, this is one of the necessary and routine tests during pregnancy. In the fourth month, this test reveals whether the baby is without deformities. In later scans, it is possible to know whether the baby's growth is normal.

If there is some complication in the pregnancy, a Sonography is useful in correctly diagnosing the same. A Sonography is entirely harmless.

It is unethical and illegal to use Sonography to determine the sex of the baby (whether it is a boy or a girl). Avoid doing it. Do not insist on it. It is quite wrong to do it.

If possible, Sonography should be done once every three months. However, it should be done at least twice, once in the fourth month and again towards the start of the ninth month.



The doctor says that blood and urine should be checked.

If you have never had to check your blood or urine earlier, are you scared to do so?

There is no reason to feel scared. The doctor in the picture is saying the same thing. What does she say? “Blood tests are necessary to know whether the pregnant woman is healthy, and whether she can withstand pregnancy and childbirth. If there is a need for blood, the blood group should be known. Besides, there are some diseases that get transmitted from a mother to her baby. If the mother is suffering from such a disease, some measures can be taken to protect the baby; if this becomes known early, there are less problems.”

Blood test report:

- Haemoglobin count
- Blood group
- Blood sugar level
- V.D.R.L. (for Syphilis)
- Hepatitis 'B'
- ELISA for H.I.V.

Urine test report:

- Sugar
- Albumin
- Infection (Pus cells)



There is bound to be some blood loss and reduction in blood haemoglobin during childbirth. This needs extra care. Ask if the doctor is going to prescribe iron and calcium supplements, and take them regularly.

Ask the doctor or the nurse to write your blood group here:

A/B/AB/O

Rh

If there is a negative (“-ve”) sign in the box on the right, do talk to your doctor or counsellor.

If there is an excess of sugar in your blood, some measures should be taken to reduce it, so that the baby does not suffer.

If you are infected with H.I.V. or any other disease, the doctor will tell you what medicine should be taken to prevent the baby from being infected. There is no need to panic. If treated in time, further risk can be largely averted.



Often, during pregnancy, one feels tired or depressed without reason. During these times, the family should be more understanding. Keeping oneself cheerful and calm is quite necessary for the baby's growth.

The baby's father may also perhaps be asked to undergo blood tests. He, too, should provide his sincere cooperation. Even if the baby is in the mother's tummy, it belongs to both of them.

It is necessary to ensure that the father does not suffer from hepatitis 'B', syphilis or H.I.V. If there is an early diagnosis, even the father can be treated appropriately. To ensure this, the baby's father should also visit the doctor, and get himself examined.



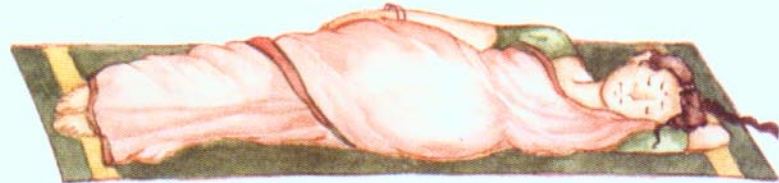


What should one eat during pregnancy?

A pregnant woman must eat enough for herself as well as for the baby in her tummy, and therefore needs to eat more.

- The meals should include lentils, pulses, rice, chapattis, vegetables, leafy vegetables and fruits.
- The proportion of lentils, pulses, soybean, etc. should especially be increased, because these contain proteins, which are necessary for the baby's growth.
- Besides proteins, there is a need for extra iron and calcium as well. Aleev, coconut, jaggery, leafy vegetables and dates should be taken for iron; ragi, bananas and milk should be taken for calcium.
- Iron and calcium supplements should also be taken. They should be continued even after childbirth, while the baby is breastfed..

- A pregnant woman needs approximately 8 hours of sleep and also some rest during the afternoon.
- After the fifth month, it is preferable to sleep on the side instead of on the back.



- Avoid : jumping, running, lifting heavy weights, drawing water or carrying large quantities of it, swimming. Working in a hurry or in a scramble should be avoided.
- Long distance travel should be avoided. Vehicles should be used with caution. Rough journeys should be avoided.

A pregnant woman can perform routine tasks

- Find out about correct posture while standing or sitting and how to lift things off the floor.
- Learn exercises for making yourself comfortable, for relaxing the body.





The life during pregnancy is not different from our normal life. The only difference is you have to be always aware about the baby in the womb. The baby's movement can be felt. Sometimes, it feels a little awkward as well. Keep an eye to check whether this movement is regularly felt.

The breasts need special care during pregnancy. From the fifth month, pull your nipples out and clean them during a bath. Sometimes, you may notice some sticky, white discharge: this is normal.

Let's talk a little about sexual intercourse as well. If you have not had a miscarriage earlier, and if you are generally healthy, then occasional intercourse is safe. After the seventh month, however, it should be avoided.

What are the danger signals during pregnancy?

- If there is even slight vaginal bleeding
- If vomiting persists without end
- If there is a burning sensation or pain while urinating
- If there is recurring dizziness

Inform the doctor within 24 hours in such cases.



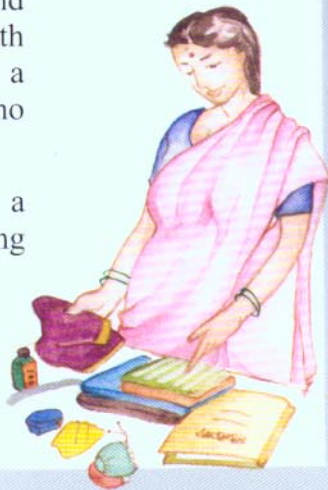
If you suffer from any of the symptoms below, consult a doctor immediately.

- If there is bleeding similar in quantity to or more than that during menstruation
- If there is fever above 100° F
- If there is severe and persistent pain in abdomen
- If there is a severe headache, if vision is affected
- If there are recurring pangs in the abdomen or in the back
- If there is a watery discharge from the vagina
- If you fall unconscious
- If urine feels stuck, accompanied by pain in abdomen
- If the baby's movement feels less than usual
- If there is a swelling on feet or face



Going for the delivery:

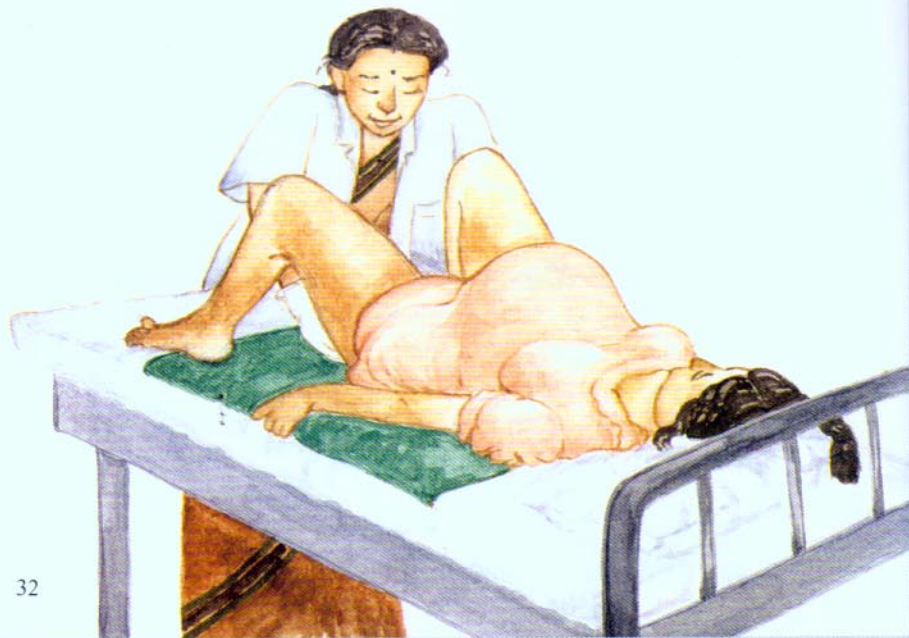
- If possible, go without eating or drinking anything.
- Take all test reports (blood, urine, Sonography) done during the pregnancy.
- Carry clean cotton clothes, safety pins, a comb and napkins, sanitary pads with you. Pack and keep such a bag ready so that there is no rush at the last moment.
- Don't go alone; take a responsible person along with you.



It is almost the end of your pregnancy now. The delivery is near. You will need to go to the hospital. How does one know when to go?

- If there are pains in the abdomen or in the waist. When the pains are felt, the lower part of tummy feels hard, contracted. Once the pains subside, it feels soft again. After a while, the pains are more frequent, and last longer.
- Bleeding: if there is a pinkish-red discharge from the vagina. When the sac containing watery fluid around the baby opens, there is a urine-like discharge from the vagina. If the sac opens too early before the childbirth, it is dangerous for the baby, so you need to rush to the hospital.

If the baby is born premature, or if it weighs less than normal, the baby needs special care.



How does a natural delivery happen?

There are three stages of a natural childbirth:

- **First Stage:** The baby's head descends in the area between the mother's pelvic bone, and its pressure on the mouth of the uterus causes it to start opening.
- **Second Stage:** The baby's head, followed by its shoulders, chest, hands, stomach and finally its feet are pushed out of the vaginal passage. The baby's entire body comes out.
- **Third Stage:** Delivery of the placenta.

Each stage lasts longer during the first delivery than in the subsequent deliveries. In case of first delivery the first stage can last 12 to 14 hours; the second may last 1 ½ to 2 hours and the third can take about ½ an hour. Subsequent deliveries may get over in 2 to 8 hours.



This is our baby we have been waiting for all these days! Be it a boy or a girl, we like it all the same.

Breast-fed babies are healthier. They do not fall ill frequently. The sticky discharge that comes during first couple of days before the milk starts flowing should also be fed to the baby.

There are of course more responsibilities now, such as looking after the baby's nutrition, vaccination and weight and, besides, plenty of joy as well!

The joy of having become a mother, and having become a father as well!