Prenatal Care

Prenatal care is essential for identifying potential and existing risk factors for the pregnancy. Prenatal visits assist the pregnant woman in practicing a healthy lifestyle and optimal self-management to prevent problems from developing.



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Prenatal Visits

Prenatal-baby in Visitor's-center

Prenatal visits should occur soon after the first missed menstrual period. Prenatal visits promote the discovery of diagnoses and preexisting maternal disorders to aid in a healthy pregnancy for the mother and fetus. The schedule for prenatal visits usually include a first visit within the first 12 weeks, monthly visits for weeks 16-28, twice a month for weeks 29-36 and weekly visits week 36 until birth. During each prenatal visit, several physical parameters are measured, while late in the last month of pregnancy, vaginal exams are performed to determine effacement and dilation.

Vital Signs, FHR

Vital Sign and Fetus Heart

It is important to monitor the pregnant woman’s vital signs to determine if the heart or lungs are becoming distressed as blood flow increases and the uterus and fetus grow. In addition, listening the fetal heart rate is important in order to determine that the fetus is continuing to thrive.

Fundal Height

Funnel

Fundal height is essential in determining fetal growth. Between weeks 18-32, the fundal height usually matches the total weeks in centimeters. Assessing for fetal growth is an important assessment in order to determine if intrauterine growth restriction is present.

Urine Dipstick

Urinal and Dipstick

A urine dipstick should be done to test for proteinuria, ketonuria, and glucose in the urine. This will be helpful in determining whether the pregnant woman is experiencing any capillary leaking of protein or gestational diabetes.

Weight

Weight-scale

It is essential for the pregnant woman to gain an appropriate amount of weight dependent on their BMI. Underweight women should gain approximately 12.5-18 kg (28-40 lbs), normal-weight women should gain roughly 11.5-16.5 kg (25-35 lbs), overweight women should gain 7-11.5 kg (15-25 lbs), and obese women should gain 5-9 kg (11-20 lbs).

Prenatal Screening

Prenatal-baby on Screen-door

During prenatal care visits the mother can have prenatal screening tests performed to assess fetal growth and possible complications.

Laboratory Testing

Lab-coat and Test-tubes

The pregnant woman should have their lab values assessed during pregnancy. The lab tests include but are not limited to hemoglobin, hematocrit, and white blood cell counts, blood type and Rh, rubella titer, urinalysis, urine culture, renal function tests, Pap test, sexual transmitted disease testing, and glucose levels. TB skin testing is administered to determine exposure to tuberculosis.

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