

Pregnancy and New Mom Toolkit



Pre-Natal Visits and Transportation



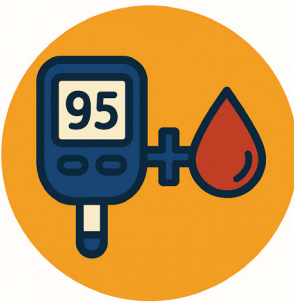
Kicking Unhealthy Habits



The Dangers of Sexually Transmitted Infections



Start Eating Healthy



Gestational Diabetes



Dangerous Conditions During and After Pregnancy



Maternal Depression



Family Planning



Bringing Your Baby Home



Post-Partum Check-Ups, Well-Child Visits, and Vaccinations

Below are helpful resources for pregnant women and new moms.

a. Pre-Natal Visits and Transportation

Seeing a doctor when you are pregnant is important for your health and the health of your growing baby. That type of care is called pre-natal care. Arkansas Medicaid encourages enrolled pregnant women to attend all prenatal care visits your doctor schedules. These visits will help the doctor:

- Detect health problems with you or your baby early
- Monitor fetal development
- Provide guidance on healthy eating and habits during pregnancy
- Prepare you for labor and delivery
- Reduce risks to you and your baby

As part of these visits, your doctor will discuss the benefits of vaccinations, like the flu vaccine, to you and your baby. During pregnancy, vaccinated moms pass on infection-fighting proteins called antibodies to their babies. Those antibodies provide some protection against certain diseases during the first few months of a baby's life when the baby is too young to be vaccinated.

Need help finding an obstetrician? Call the ConnectCare helpline at 1-800-275-1131 (TTY: 1-800-285-1131) Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. to find a prenatal care provider near you.

If you need a ride to a prenatal visit, Medicaid may be able to help. Visit our Non-Emergency Transportation site (afmc.org/individuals/non-emergency-transportation) to learn more about eligibility for transportation and how to get a ride.

b. Kicking Unhealthy Habits

Drinking alcohol, smoking, and vaping are legal for adults, but they can harm a pregnant woman and her baby, so it's important to quit right away. Illegal drugs and unauthorized use of medication are also harmful to you and your baby.

Arkansas offers confidential, non-judgmental help and support to moms who want to quit:

- **1-844-763-0198** – Mental Health and Addiction Support Line – Agents will help you find a provider in your area.
- **1-833-283-WELL** – Be Well Arkansas Line – Agents can provide you with information and resources to quit smoking. You can also visit BeWellArkansas.org.

c. The Dangers of Sexually Transmitted Infections

Infections passed between a pregnant woman and her partner during sex can cause serious and potentially life-threatening health issues for you and your baby during pregnancy and at birth. It's important that you tell your doctor if you suspect you or your partner may have a sexually transmitted disease.

- Ask your doctor to test you for syphilis, HIV, and other infections that can be passed on to your baby.
- Get treatment. If tests show you have an infection, get treatment right away. Syphilis, for example, can cause a baby to be born with an enlarged spleen, rashes, or, in the worst cases, stillbirth or death shortly after birth. These complications are preventable with treatment.

- Make sure your partner gets tested and treated, too.
- Don't be embarrassed. Doctors want to know if you think you might be infected so that they can provide quick treatment and keep you and your baby safe.

d. Start Eating Healthy

Eating healthy meals will help you and your baby get the nutrition needed during pregnancy. It also helps pregnant women maintain a healthy weight and is important when a woman breastfeeds. Arkansas offers the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program to help families buy healthy food and get tips on healthy eating.

To see if you may be eligible, visit the Arkansas Department of Health's website - healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/community-family-child-health/wic-women-infants-children

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps eligible individuals and families cover a portion of their household's food budget. For more information, go visit the Arkansas Department of Human Services' website - <https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/divisions-shared-services/county-operations/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-snap/>

Food banks across Arkansas help individuals and families get food immediately. To find a food pantry in your area, visit the Arkansas Food Bank's website (arkansasfoodbank.org) or the Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance's website (arhungeralliance.org/emergency-resources).

e. Gestational Diabetes

Some women develop a type of diabetes called gestational diabetes when they are pregnant. It causes high blood sugar and can be harmful to you and your baby. Women who develop this condition usually do so in their third trimester of pregnancy. Your doctor will test you for gestational diabetes. For most women, gestational diabetes goes away once they deliver their baby.

If you have gestational diabetes, talk with your doctor about things you should be doing to help. Those can include:

- Exercising
- Eating healthy meals with whole fruits and veggies, moderate amounts of lean protein and whole grains, and less sugary foods and beverages.
- Taking medication prescribed by your doctor
- Testing your blood sugar daily or multiple times a day

f. Dangerous Conditions During and After Pregnancy

Women can develop serious health issues during and after pregnancy, such as high blood pressure, blood clots, and hemorrhaging. Know the signs of each of these conditions and what you should do about them.

High blood pressure and pre-eclampsia

Monitoring your blood pressure is important during pregnancy. High blood pressure is common, and you should talk with your doctor if you notice it is high while checking it at home. High blood pressure can lead to a serious condition called pre-eclampsia, which can cause seizure, stroke, organ failure, and even death for the mother and baby.

Seek medical attention if you have symptoms such as:

- Severe headaches
- Swollen hands, feet, legs, or face
- Blurred vision or temporary blindness
- Trouble breathing
- Severe abdominal pain

Blood clots and hemorrhaging

After giving birth, women can be at risk for developing life-threatening blood clots and excessive blood loss called hemorrhaging. Talk to your doctor about the risks, symptoms, and things you can do to help prevent these serious conditions.

g. Maternal Depression

Experiencing depression or anxiety after giving birth is very common. Some federal studies have shown that 1 in every 8 women who give birth experience maternal depression. Treatment is available. If you experience any of the symptoms below, you should talk with your doctor or provider about how you are feeling and ask what treatment options may be right for you.

Symptoms

It's common for women to experience the "baby blues," which usually start within a couple days after birth and last for about two weeks. Women experiencing the baby blues usually feel sadness, moodiness, or a sense of being overwhelmed. This is normal and should resolve on its own.

Postpartum depression is more serious, could interfere with your ability to care for yourself or your newborn, and is something you should talk with your doctor about as soon as you recognize the signs. Symptoms include:

- Feeling depressed or hopeless
- Crying a lot
- Difficulty bonding with your baby
- Fear that you are not a good mother
- Inability to concentrate
- Severe anxiety
- Thoughts of harming yourself or your baby

What to do when you're in crisis?

If you feel like you are going to harm yourself or your baby, seek help from friends or family to take care of your baby. For immediate help, dial **988**, the national suicide and crisis lifeline. You can also call your doctor or provider or seek mental health treatment.

h. Family Planning

Families, especially those with a new baby, may want to reduce the risk of an unplanned pregnancy. Arkansas Medicaid covers the cost of contraception as part of its family planning benefit. Covered family planning services include:

- Birth control pills and other prescription contraceptives that would be prescribed by your doctor or provider.

- Long-acting, reversible contraceptives (LARC) and intrauterine devices (IUD) that can be inserted or implanted immediately after birth, during the postpartum period, or later. Medicaid also pays for removal.
- Injectables used for birth control, such as medroxyprogesterone acetate.
- Sterilization under certain criteria.

Talk to your obstetrician or primary care provider about what option may be right for you.

i. Bringing Your Baby Home

Bringing your new baby home can feel overwhelming and scary. That's normal. Arkansas Medicaid wants to help you provide the safest home possible by giving you important information you need to know before you bring baby home.

- **Babies need extra protection in cars.** Arkansas law requires that all babies and children up to age 6 or 60 pounds be in a car seat when in a moving vehicle. Car seats can save your baby's life in an accident. Arkansas Children's Hospital has more information about the types of seats to use at what age and when it is safe to move to a booster seat or regular seat belt.
- **Breastfeeding is the best source of nutrition.** Breastfeeding has many health benefits for baby and mom. If you need support to breastfeed, Arkansas Medicaid covers lactation consultant services. Talk with your baby's doctor if you have concerns about breastfeeding.
- **Know the ABCs of safe sleep.** The safest way for a newborn to sleep is **ALONE**, on his **BACK**, and in a **CRIB**.
 - » Keep pillows, blankets, toys, stuffed animals, and crib bumpers out of the baby's sleeping space. Those items can increase the risk of suffocation. Babies can sleep in a swaddle for the first eight weeks and a sleep sack with their arms out after that.
 - » The safest position for babies to sleep in is on their backs. That position reduces the risks of sleep-related death.
 - » Use a crib, bassinet, or portable play yard with a firm mattress and fitted sheet only. Avoid placing babies to sleep on a couch, in a chair, or in the bed with you, especially if you or your partner have been drinking or are impaired in some way.
- **Read aloud to your baby every day.** Reading to babies, even newborns, is important for brain development. It also builds the foundation for language and will help create a bond between you and your child.
 - » The Arkansas Imagination Library will send your child a free book every month from birth to age five. Enroll by going to the Imagination Library website.
- **Violence is never OK, especially with a new baby in the home.** There is help available if you are experiencing violence or abuse from your intimate partner. Talk to your doctor, a trusted adult, or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-7233** or text **"START"** to **88788**.
- **It's normal for newborns to cry a lot.** The crying can be because a baby is hungry, has a wet or dirty diaper, is sick, or is overstimulated. Try addressing these issues and call your baby's doctor if you think that is necessary.
 - » Sometimes you may not be able to identify the reason for the crying. Try to soothe the baby through touch, music, or white noise.
 - » If the crying is causing you to get angry or frustrated, it's OK to put the baby in a safe location, like a crib, and to briefly step away to the porch or backyard for a few moments to reduce your stress.
 - » Take deep breaths and call a trusted friend or family member if you need time away.

j. Post-Partum Check-Ups, Well-Child Visits, and Vaccinations

Your need for care doesn't stop once you deliver the baby. Every woman should have at least one checkup after giving birth called a postpartum checkup. During this visit, your doctor will make sure you are healing well, will screen you for postpartum depression, and will address any questions you may have.

Your baby also should begin having regular checkups, called well-child or well-baby visits, soon after birth. Medicaid covers all of these visits for your covered newborn at no cost to you. During these visits, your child's doctor will monitor your child's health and development, offer recommended and life-saving vaccinations, and answer questions about your baby.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends regular well-child visits and following the vaccination schedule, because vaccines are the safest way of preventing disease, disability, and death in children.