

Planning for Pregnancy

WOMEN WITH HYPERTENSION

Background

Health care providers call high blood pressure hypertension. Some women have hypertension (high BP) before they get pregnant. Other women get high BP while they are pregnant and have it after delivery. Women with high BP before, during, or after pregnancy need extra care. You and your baby can be as healthy as possible if you plan for pregnancy. You can help your blood pressure before getting pregnant by losing weight and being more physically active.

How Hypertension Affects Pregnancy

High BP during pregnancy can hurt a woman and her baby. It can cause breathing, heart, kidney, and liver problems for a woman. High BP in pregnancy also increases the risk of heart disease and other problems later in life for the mother. High BP can cause growth problems in babies before they are born. Sometimes the problems are so bad that health care providers want to deliver the baby early. Sometimes a baby dies before it is born.

How Pregnancy Affects Hypertension

Some women may get high BP for the first time during pregnancy. This is called *gestational hypertension*. If a woman has gestational hypertension, her health care provider may recommend that she see a doctor with special training in taking care of pregnant women with high BP. The health care provider may see the woman more often (weekly). This lets the health care provider make sure her blood pressure is under control and her baby is growing. Other women with high BP get even sicker during pregnancy and have *preeclampsia*. Preeclampsia may get very bad for some women, called eclampsia. Women with preeclampsia or eclampsia should see a specialist.

How Medications for Hypertension May Affect Pregnancy

Some women need medicine for high BP. If you are on medicine for high BP, ask your health care provider if it is safe for pregnancy. Women can safely take some medicines for high BP during pregnancy. Women should also take 0.4 milligrams of folic acid once a day before and during pregnancy. If a woman had high BP in another pregnancy, her health care provider may tell her to take one baby aspirin a day during the next pregnancy.

What You Can Do

- 1) Take a daily vitamin with folic acid (folate) before you become pregnant.
- 2) Talk with your health care provider if you are thinking about getting pregnant.
- 3) Talk with your health care provider about possible risks for the baby and for you.
- 4) Follow your health care provider's advice about follow-up visits.
- 5) Ask your health care provider about taking baby aspirin.



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