



The Art of Parenting While Sick helps parents with chronic health conditions feel seen and supported and find solidarity in a global community. To learn more, visit parentingwhilesick.com

HOW DO I...

talk to my doctors about family planning with a chronic health condition?

Questions to Ask About Pregnancy, Childbirth, and Postpartum Care

Fertility

1. How does my condition affect my ability to get pregnant?
2. What tests might I need to assess my fertility? Should I get an egg or semen analysis? Should I get my hormones tested?
3. Do I need screening for anything—such as antibodies—that could affect my fertility or pregnancy?
4. If I pursue in-vitro fertilization (IVF), could my condition make it less likely to succeed?
5. Does my condition increase my risk of miscarriage? If so, is there anything I can do to reduce that risk?
6. How long should my symptoms be well controlled before I try to get pregnant?
7. What can I do to be as healthy as possible before trying to conceive? Are there lifestyle changes you recommend?
8. Will I need to stop taking any of my medications before getting pregnant? If so:
 - How long before pregnancy should I stop them?
 - Are there safer alternatives I could take instead?

Before and During Pregnancy ➡

Before and During Pregnancy

1. How might pregnancy affect my condition? Could it improve, stay the same, or worsen?
2. Does my condition increase my risk of complications such as, pre-eclampsia, gestational diabetes, or premature birth?
3. What warning signs related to my condition should I watch out for during pregnancy?
4. If I notice these symptoms, when should I seek urgent care?
5. Should I monitor anything at home, such as my blood pressure or blood sugar?
6. Will I need additional tests or screening during pregnancy?
7. *(If you have joint pain or arthritis)* How can I manage pain in my hips and joints as my pregnancy progresses?
8. Which doctors should be involved in my care, and how will they coordinate during my pregnancy?
9. Should I see any of the following specialists?
 - a fertility specialist
 - a high-risk obstetrician (maternal-fetal medicine specialist)
 - a genetic counselor
10. What supplements or vitamins should I take? Is there anything I should avoid?
11. Will I need to stop any medications during pregnancy? If so, what alternatives are available?
12. If I take oral medication and have morning sickness, what should I do if I vomit after taking my medicine?



**Medication
during pregnancy**



Taking medication during pregnancy

About 80% of pregnant women take at least one medication during pregnancy.

In many cases, stopping a medication can be dangerous for the mother—and therefore for the baby.

In 2015, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) removed its old pregnancy letter categories (A, B, C, D, X). The system was often confusing and sometimes discouraged people from taking medications that were actually safe—or even necessary—during pregnancy.

The FDA replaced it with a system focused on individualized risk-benefit counseling between patients and doctors. In some cases, continuing medication is safer than stopping it.



If you feel uncertain about your doctor's recommendation for what medication you can take during your pregnancy, it could be a good idea to seek a second opinion.

You can also contact a patient foundation related to your condition to ask about pregnancy guidelines and medication safety.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Medications

1. What are the risks, clinical considerations, and available data about using this medication during pregnancy?
2. Has this medication been taken by many pregnant women without harmful effects on the fetus?
3. Have animal studies been conducted? If so, what did they show?
4. Can I enroll in a pregnancy registry for this medication? (Registries collect data about medication exposure during pregnancy and outcomes for the baby.)



Childbirth

1. Does my condition increase any risks during labor or delivery?
2. Which of my doctors should the obstetric team notify when I go into labor?
3. Will I need any continuous medications during childbirth?
4. Is there any reason I might be advised to have a cesarean section?
5. Are there any contraindications to anesthesia because of my condition?
6. What pain-management strategies during labor are safest for me?
7. Should I plan to give birth in a hospital rather than a clinic or at home?
8. *(If you have joint pain or arthritis)* Are there comfort strategies I can use during labor—such as warm baths, gentle stretching, or massage?

After Childbirth

1. How should I manage flare-ups of my condition after giving birth?
- **Breastfeeding**
 2. Which medications can I safely continue while breastfeeding?
 3. Which medications should I stop while breastfeeding?
 4. If I must stop a medication, are there safer alternatives?
 5. If I develop mastitis, is there any reason I cannot take antibiotics?
 - **Physical Recovery and Caring for a Baby**
 6. How can I protect my joints and body while caring for a newborn?
 7. Do you recommend specific supportive equipment such as:
 - ergonomic baby carriers or slings
 - adaptable strollers or car seats
 - orthotics or braces?

