

## TALK IT OVER

*It is important to open the lines of communication with your health care team during pregnancy.*

- *Talk about your baby's father and the role he will play in the pregnancy.*
- *Tell them if you feel safe and loved, and what rapport you have.*
- *Explain how your family and friends feel about this pregnancy.*
- *Find out how you can take prenatal classes.*
- *Talk about breastfeeding.*



REMEMBER TO TAKE THIS JOURNAL WITH YOU TO EVERY VISIT WITH YOUR DOCTOR.

## Your first prenatal visit

Your first visit is usually more in-depth and longer than the rest. It may include a pregnancy test to confirm your pregnancy, an internal physical exam of your reproductive organs and pelvis, as well as a complete “checkup” of your whole body. Your health care provider will listen to your heart and check your blood pressure. Your height and weight will be measured.

Details about your medical and obstetrical history will be explored. If you saw your health care provider when you were planning to get pregnant, you may go over some of the same topics you discussed then. During this visit, your health care provider will also calculate your due date. This is usually done by calculating from the 1<sup>st</sup> day of your last menstrual period, so you should make sure that you have this date handy for your first visit.

Your health care provider knows how important it is for you to be well informed about your pregnancy and your developing baby. But office visits, even this first long one, may not cover every topic. That's why you will be encouraged to read education materials such as this handbook and to attend prenatal classes.

## What are all these tests for?

When you have your first prenatal visit, a number of laboratory tests are routinely recommended. These help predict risks to your health and that of your baby. They may include:

**Hemoglobin:** A hemoglobin test checks your blood to make sure it is able to carry enough iron and oxygen. (See page 11 – What is anemia?)

**Blood group and antibody screen:** This blood test checks to see what type of blood and Rh factor you have and looks for any unusual antibodies in your blood. (See blood group and Rh factor on the next page).

**Rubella titre:** This blood test checks to see if you have immunity to rubella (German measles). (See page 18 – German measles).

**Varicella (chicken pox):** If you have previously had chicken pox, your body will already have immunity and testing will not be required. If not, a test will be ordered to check for antibodies to this virus.

**Hepatitis B surface antigens:** A blood test to see if you have been exposed to hepatitis B (read more about hepatitis B on page 28).

**VDRL:** A blood test to screen for possible previous exposure to syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease.

**Urine test:** A test to check sugar and protein levels in your urine, and to see if you have a urinary tract infection (chronic urinary tract infections have been linked to an increased risk of premature labour).

**Pap test:** Pap tests are done to check for cancer of the cervix or conditions that could lead to cancer.

**HIV:** A blood test to check for a possible previous exposure to HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

## Blood group and Rh factor

Your blood is one of four types: A, B, AB, or O. A person's blood type is determined by the type of "antigen" attached to the blood cells. An antigen is a protein that causes a response from your immune system (the system that protects you from infection). Type A blood has only A antigens attached to its blood cells. Type B blood has only B antigens. Type AB has both antigens. Type O blood has none.

## WHAT IS FIFTH DISEASE AND SHOULD I BE WORRIED?

*Fifth disease is a common viral illness caused by parvovirus B19. Because young children can contract this illness, pregnant mothers often can come in contact with it. The virus causes a mild illness in children, often with a red rash on the face, trunk and limbs. If a pregnant woman is exposed there are usually no serious complications. Over half of women have previously been infected and are immune. If infected, the mother may have fever, rash and joint pain but most women have no symptoms. In very rare cases, it can infect an unborn baby and cause illness or death.*

*If a pregnant woman is exposed to or develops signs of parvovirus infection, she should have her blood tested for antibodies to determine if she is immune. Certain women are at a higher risk of infection, including daycare workers, school teachers, and mothers of young children. Hand washing may help to decrease infection; however, there is no evidence that women reduce their risk of infection by leaving work. If you are pregnant and think you may have been exposed to this virus, talk to your health care provider.*