

# How to encourage a healthy pregnancy and help your baby get a healthy start

Pregnancy is often a time of excitement and joy, but it can also feel overwhelming. Here are 5 tips to help you have a healthy pregnancy and birth.



1. Take charge of your health.



2. Choose your maternity care provider and birth setting wisely.



3. Learn ahead of time how common medical procedures can affect you and your baby, avoid those without clear benefit.



4. Brush up on your maternity benefits and rights at work.



5. Plan for support once your baby arrives.



## 5 common pregnancy myths

**1** **MYTH:** Pregnancy lasts for exactly 9 months (36 weeks).  
**FACT:** A full-term pregnancy is about 10 months (39 weeks or longer) and the length varies from woman to woman.<sup>1</sup>

**2** **MYTH:** Elective birth, both labor induction and cesarean, before 39 weeks carries no risk.  
**FACT:** Elective birth before 39 weeks increases risk of complications, including use of the newborn intensive care unit.<sup>2</sup>



**MYTH:** Hospitals are the only safe place to give birth.  
**FACT:** There are an increasing number of independent birth centers for people seeking personalized care with midwives.<sup>3</sup>



**MYTH:** Breastfeeding and formula are equal.  
**FACT:** Studies have found measurable health benefits for moms and babies who breastfeed.<sup>4</sup>



**MYTH:** A little alcohol is OK.  
**FACT:** No amount of alcohol is proven safe, and alcohol increases risk of preterm birth, birth defects and developmental problems.<sup>5</sup>

1. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [www.acog.org/About-ACOG/News-Room/News-Releases/2013/Ob-Gyns-Redefine-Meaning-of-Term-Pregnancy](http://www.acog.org/About-ACOG/News-Room/News-Releases/2013/Ob-Gyns-Redefine-Meaning-of-Term-Pregnancy)  
2. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [www.acog.org/About-ACOG/ACOG-Departments/Deliveries-Before-39-Weeks](http://www.acog.org/About-ACOG/ACOG-Departments/Deliveries-Before-39-Weeks)  
3. American Association of Birth Centers. (n.d.). Retrieved November 11, 2015, from [birthcenters.org](http://birthcenters.org)  
4. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists [www.acog.org/Resources-And-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Obstetric-Practice/Optimizing-Support-for-Breastfeeding-as-Part-of-Obstetric-Practice](http://www.acog.org/Resources-And-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Obstetric-Practice/Optimizing-Support-for-Breastfeeding-as-Part-of-Obstetric-Practice)  
5. March of Dimes [www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/alcohol-during-pregnancy.aspx](http://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/alcohol-during-pregnancy.aspx)

For more information, go to [www.childbirthconnection.org](http://www.childbirthconnection.org).

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