



GUIDE TO
**maternal
& child
health**

WOMEN 
for a Healthy
ENVIRONMENT



In the words

of a Native American midwife, Katsi Cook, a women's body is the first environment. When a new baby is about to arrive, expectant parents get to work preparing a safe environment for their new addition. Avoiding certain chemicals, eating healthy and exercising are vital during pregnancy.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) provided the opinion that *"The scientific evidence over the last 15 years shows that exposure to toxic environmental agents before conception and during pregnancy can have significant and long-lasting effects on reproductive health."* The umbilical cord is the lifeline between the mother and baby. However, studies have shown that the umbilical cord and the placenta do not have the ability to filter the baby from harmful chemicals that the mother inhales, ingests or absorbs through the skin.

This guide offers tips for creating a healthy environment for moms (or soon-to-be moms) and provides helpful information on how to have a safe and healthier pregnancy, baby and home.



WOMEN
for a Healthy
ENVIRONMENT

5877 Commerce Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15206
412.404.2872 | Info@womenforahealthyenvironment.org
womenforahealthyenvironment.org

healthy baby

Cloth Diapers

On average children will go through about 5,000 to 8,000 diapers before they are toilet trained. That's a lot of diapers to be sending to the landfill, but the alternative choice is cloth diapers. Many would flinch at the idea of using them, but they have come a long way and are sold in a variety of styles and sizes. If selecting a cloth diaper, you will also need to use a liner and cover. Liners, which provide extra absorbance for overnight, and covers, protect clothing and the child's bed from wetness. How often you do laundry influences the number of diapers you will need. Healthy Child, Healthy World recommends starting with three to five dozen, which range from \$2.00 to \$15.00 a diaper. Presoaking is not necessary for cloth diapers; just put the diaper, after flushing the feces down the toilet, in a bin and wash within two days to prevent mold growth. To prevent odors in the bin, use baking soda, vinegar, or borax. If you prefer disposable diapers, buy chlorine-free disposable diapers.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding provides the best possible nutrition that a new mother can give her little one. Breast milk contains all the nutrients an infant needs to thrive plus antibodies which protect against common childhood diseases.

Breastfeeding has positive affects into adulthood as well. If a child was breastfeed they usually have lower blood pressure and cholesterol, are less likely to be obese, and less likely to suffer from type-2 diabetes as an adult. It is not always possible to breastfeed or a mother may have to supplement with formula. Seek formulas that provide the best organic choice for infants with packaging free of bisphenol-A (BPA).

Baby Products

Many infant and child personal care product brands are coming out with natural lines, but buyers beware that these lines may still contain toxic chemicals. Labels that say eco-friendly and natural are marketing terms, not legal standards. When buying personal care products for your baby read the labels and avoid products that contain fragrance, parabens, phthalates, and triclosan. Purchase products that are plant-based and have the fewest and safest ingredients. Remember don't over expose your baby to products such as nail polish and makeup; they will have time for that as they get older.



Top 10 Tips for a Healthy You

- 1 Incorporate exercise into your daily routine. Try physical activities such as walking, yoga or swimming.
- 2 Eliminate smoking, the use of drugs and drinking alcohol.
- 3 Avoid personal care products that contain the ingredient "Fragrance." Fragrances are considered trade secrets and can contain a wide range of 3,000 chemicals. Look for products that are labeled as fragrance-free.
- 4 Avoid nail polish and hair dyes that may contain harmful chemicals, such as toluene, formaldehyde, diethyl phthalate, and quaternium-15 that are linked to health problems. Refer to WHE's Top 12 Toxins to Avoid card.
- 5 Use natural stretch mark creams, such as cocoa or shea butter.
- 6 Keep you and your baby hydrated by drinking water. Purchase a pitcher for home that has a filter. Water helps keep your skin hydrated and reduces stretch marks.
- 7 Ask your doctor about which prenatal vitamins are best for you.
- 8 Protect yourself from the sun! Wear protective clothing, a wide brim hat and sunglasses. Use sunscreen with ingredients such as zinc oxide and remember to reapply! Avoid aerosol sunscreen sprays and eliminate tanning bed use.
- 9 Avoid changing cat litter, due to risk of toxoplasma (parasite shed in cat's feces). If you must change litter, wear disposable gloves and wash hands with soap & water.
- 10 Deal with stress appropriately. Use stress-reducing techniques such as yoga, breathing exercises or get a relaxing prenatal massage.

healthy home

Green Nursery Tips

Painting

Parents usually decide to paint the nursery before the baby arrives and do not realize that these paints release volatile organic compounds (VOC), which reduce indoor air quality. VOCs affect children much greater than adults. These chemicals can linger in nurseries for months after the room is painted. Be aware of the paint you are using and seek paints with low or no VOCs. There are paints on the market today that are water-based or milk-based and considered safer alternatives.

Flooring

Carpet is a breeding ground for bacteria and with babies crawling all over it, requires a lot of cleaning in order to maintain a safe space for your baby to play. A safer alternative is hardwood flooring and throw rugs, which can easily be thrown in the wash. Review the hardwood finish. Many finishes contain formaldehyde and VOC's, so select a natural finish. Other natural flooring includes bamboo, cork flooring and wool carpet. Note that laminate flooring is not a substitute for hardwood flooring. Many only have a thin layer of wood and are attached together with toxic glues. If new flooring isn't in your budget, you can get your existing carpets steam cleaned with pure steam. Alternatively, some carpet cleaning companies offer a chemical-free service.

Cribs, Bedding, & Blankets

Babies sleep 50-60% of their day.

The crib, changing table, and other furniture should be made of natural woods and have natural finishes, not chemical finishes. It's best to seek blankets and sheets that are made from natural materials such as cotton, silk, bamboo, and hemp. Seek crib mattresses that are made from organic cotton or wool, a plastic cover made from a food-grade polyethylene, and a natural mattress cover. If there's one "chemical-free" change you are able to make, select a non-toxic crib & mattress.



Top 10 Tips for a Healthy Home

- 1 Fresh Air: Everything a pregnant mother breathes in transfers to her unborn child. Avoid air fresheners and seek natural scents such as cinnamon and cloves. Choose candles made from beeswax or soy.
- 2 Green and Natural Cleaning Products: Select plant-based, rather than petroleum-based products. Make your own cleaning products by using household items such as vinegar and baking soda.
- 3 Seek paints with low or no Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and use proper ventilation during and after painting.
- 4 Plastics: Replace plastic food containers with glass, avoid plastics labeled with a #3, 6 or 7 on the bottom.
- 5 Avoid using non-stick and teflon coated cookware. Choose stainless steel and cast iron.
- 6 Test your indoor air quality (IAQ) for lead (if house built before 1978) and radon. Fix water leaks quickly and make sure your home is well ventilated, especially the kitchen & bathroom.
- 7 Avoid using pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers on your lawn and garden. Create your own compost bin with scraps from your kitchen and yard.
- 8 Seek natural flooring. Avoid installing carpet that may contain VOCs and replace cushions that have the foam exposed.
- 9 Use micro-fiber cloths and mops to pick up dust instead of aerosols and wipes. Wet mopping is best.
- 10 Leave your shoes at the door. You'll avoid bringing in dust, pesticides and other outdoor pollutants.

healthy eating

& Smart Shopping



When selecting feeding items such as baby bottles and sippy cups, choose products that are listed as PVC and bisphenol-A (BPA) free.



Beware of toys that contain toxic plastic softeners (phthalates), PVC (#3 plastics), and fragrances. When you're not quite sure avoid the "rubber ducky." Also be cautious of imported or antique toys that may contain toxic lead paint.



When buying a toy, look for items that are made from wood or cloth. If a toy can be reused like a dollhouse or play set, then purchase a higher quality item that can be passed onto a family member or friend.



Think about where the toy is manufactured. If it can be purchased from a local retailer, then it is a great idea to support your local business.



Top 10 Tips for Healthy Eating

- 1 Eat a varied diet. One that is rich in protein, whole grains and folic acid.
- 2 Avoid fish that contains high levels of methylmercury: Swordfish, tilefish, king mackerel, and shark. Avoid farm-raised fish including salmon. For a complete list of fish visit - www.seafoodwatch.org and www.epa.gov/mercury/advisories.htm
- 3 Always wash off fruits and vegetables prior to eating. Some produce such as apples and berries contain a high amount of pesticide residue. Visit www.ewg.org for a list of those produce items you should consider purchasing as organic. Shop for color!
- 4 Support local farms (www.buylocalpa.org) by visiting farmers' markets and eating a variety of foods. Start your own backyard garden or join a community garden
- 5 Buy fresh, whole foods and reduce intake of processed foods containing artificial preservatives, chemicals, sweeteners, coloring and flavors.
- 6 Avoid meats and dairy products containing added hormones, antibiotics and other chemicals. Trim fat on meat and remove skin from fish and poultry.
- 7 Avoid canned food (the lining contains BPA). Instead, choose fresh or frozen foods and foods packaged in glass or TetraPak® containers.
- 8 Rather than cook your plastic food packages in the microwave, simmer or boil your food on the stovetop and never cover food with plastic then heat.
- 9 Choose to cook at home rather than ordering take-out. Better for you, better for baby!
- 10 Limit food and drinks containing caffeine. March of Dimes recommends that women who are pregnant get no more than 200 milligrams (mg) of caffeine/day (equal to one 12-ounce cup of coffee).

healthy recipes

Talc Free Baby Power

Ingredients & Directions:

- 1/2 cup corn starch
- 1/2 cup arrowroot powder
- 1/4 cup finely ground oats or oat flour
- 1 drop Roman chamomile essential oil (optional)
- 1-2 drops lavender essential oil
- 1/4 cup finely ground oats (optional)

Mix ingredients together and put in shaker of your choice!



grassfedmama.com/2014/03/19/diy-talc-free-baby-powder-dry-shampoo/

Baby Wash & Shampoo

Ingredients & Directions:

- 1/4 cup Dr. Bronner's Castile Soap, Baby Mild (unscented)
- 2 tablespoons almond oil (or olive, jojoba or oil of your choice)
- 1 tablespoon vitamin E oil

*Fill 12 oz empty bottle with ingredients.
Slowly add water until bottle is filled to top!*



mymerrymessylife.com/2012/10/homemade-moisturizing-baby-shampoo-recipe-free-printable



Sugar Scrubs

Strawberry Hand & Foot Exfoliant

- 1 tablespoon strawberries puréed in blender
- 1/2 teaspoon olive oil (you may substitute other oils)
- 1/4 teaspoon rosemary
- 1-2 tablespoons of coarse salt, such as Kosher salt or sea salt, or 1-2 tablespoons of sugar

Pumpkin Pie Sugar Scrub

- 1/3 cup of brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon coconut oil
- 3-5 drops safflower oil (or oil of your choice)
- 1/8 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

Combine ingredients in small container and mix well. Massage onto hands and feet. Rinse and pat dry. Use within two weeks and enjoy!

All-Purpose Cleaner

Ingredients & Directions:

- 2 cups white vinegar
- 2 cups water
- 20-30 drops of essential oil such as orange or lemon (optional)

Mix ingredients and use in spray bottle!

Contact us today to schedule a maternal and child health presentation, or to support programs that create healthy communities!

412.404.2872

info@WomenForAHealthyEnvironment.org

WOMEN
for a Healthy
ENVIRONMENT

5877 Commerce Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15206
412.404.2872 | info@WomenForAHealthyEnvironment.org
WomenForAHealthyEnvironment.org

Thank you to The Heinz Endowments for their financial assistance.

THE HEINZ ENDOWMENTS
HOWARD HEINZ ENDOWMENT • VIRA I. HEINZ ENDOWMENT

Sources: EPA.gov, CDC.gov/pregnancy, NIEHS.NIH.gov

