



This newsletter provides important information about your baby through infancy and early childhood. You will receive 10 issues of this newsletter before your child reaches age 5. Other publications for parents include *Path to Parenthood* and *Growing Up Healthy*. If you have any questions about the content of this newsletter or are interested in a home visit or other assistance, please call one of the Vermont Department Health district offices listed below:

Barre..... 802-479-4200	Newport ..... 802-334-6707
888-253-8786	800-952-2945
Bennington..... 802-447-3531	Rutland ..... 802-786-5811
800-637-7347	888-253-8802
Brattleboro..... 802-257-2880	St. Albans..... 802-524-7970
888-253-8805	888-253-8801
Burlington..... 802-863-7323	St. Johnsbury ..... 802-748-5151
888-253-8803	800-952-2936
Middlebury ..... 802-388-4644	Springfield ..... 802-885-5778
888-253-8804	888-296-8151
Morrisville ..... 802-888-7447	White River Junction 802-295-8820
888-253-8798	888-253-8799

Your health insurance benefits include many preventive services at no charge to you: regular health check-ups and dental visits; immunizations (shots); vision and hearing checks; and child safety and developmental guidance.

Information in these newsletters was adapted from the following sources: *Touchpoints*, T. Berry Brazelton, MD; *Babytalk*; *Link Letters*, Healthy Steps; *Baby Your Baby*, Utah Department of Health; *Cradle Crier*, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension; *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child*, American Academy of Pediatrics; and *Path To Parenthood*, Vermont Department for Children and Families.

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# growing up healthy

A newsletter from Healthy Babies, Kids & Families



**P R E N A T A L**

*Congratulations! You are about to experience one of the most rewarding, challenging, and enriching events of your life.*

If you're a first-time parent, you're sure to be filled with questions and anticipation about pregnancy, labor and delivery. In addition, you may wonder about how you will be as a parent and how your baby will change your life.

If you're already a parent, you may wonder if this pregnancy and delivery will be similar to your past experiences. You might wonder how another baby will change your life again, and affect the lives of your older children.

### The Third Trimester

During the next three months, or third trimester, regular prenatal care is still one of the most important things you can do to make sure you and your baby—she's now about 16 inches long and weighs about four pounds—are healthy.

You will become even more aware of your pregnancy and the activity of your baby (she will have periods of sleep and wakefulness). You may wonder what your baby will be like and about life adjustments that lie ahead. Now is a good time to start thinking about a birth plan for labor and delivery, and begin collecting baby supplies.

It is important to take a prenatal class to help prepare you for the birth of your baby, especially if this is your first child. Many classes also have

sessions on breastfeeding, sibling preparation, and infant care. If you need help finding a prenatal class, call your local Vermont Department of Health office.

### Consider Breastfeeding

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends breastfeeding for the first 12 months of your baby's life and beyond as desired by mom and baby. Breastfeeding is a natural way to feed your baby. Breast milk has all the nutrients your baby needs—it's fresh, clean, costs less than formula and is always ready at the right temperature. Breast milk is also more easily digested than formula. It protects against diarrhea and infections, and babies are never allergic to it.

For you, breastfeeding may help burn off the extra weight gained during pregnancy. It will also give you a special intimacy with your new baby, bringing you together, skin to skin, many times each day.

If you are interested in breastfeeding, talk it over with people who are important to you. Ask other women about their experiences. Watch someone breastfeed. And discuss your ideas, questions and concerns with your nutritionist, childbirth educator, midwife, physician or public health nurse; who can help you find an informational class or support group.

If you will be returning to work or school, plan ahead by talking with your employer or advisor. You can combine breast and bottle feeding by expressing breast milk when you will be apart. More and more mothers find ways to work, study and breastfeed.

If you do choose formula, consider using iron-fortified infant formula.

## Nutrition and Healthy Living

Prenatal care—an important part of making sure you and your growing baby are as healthy as possible—is more than just prenatal visits to your health care provider (your family doctor, nurse practitioner, or midwife). It's also childbirth education, and taking good care of yourself every day.

A good diet for pregnancy is one with lots of different foods—plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, dairy products, protein foods (meat, fish, nuts, eggs and beans), some fat (such as oil or butter), and about two quarts of liquid a day. It is never too late in pregnancy to improve your eating habits—your baby will benefit whenever you make needed changes.

WIC (a federal nutrition program) can provide nutritious foods to supplement your diet, information on healthy eating, and referrals for health care. For more information about WIC and other assistance programs, call 800-464-4343 or your local Vermont Department of Health office listed on the back of this newsletter.

## Finding Child Care

Will you be going back to work after the baby is born? Even though it may seem far off, now is the time to start looking for child care. Both in-home child care and child care centers have limited space, and usually, long waiting lists. By calling now, chances are good that at least one of your top choices will have an opening for your baby.

It is very important to find a place you feel comfortable leaving your baby. A local child care resource and referral agency can help you find licensed and registered child care providers in your area. Visit as many as possible, ask questions, watch carefully, and trust your instincts. You also may be eligible for financial assistance. For more information, call the Child Development Division at 1-800-649-2642 or visit [www.brightfuturesinfo.org](http://www.brightfuturesinfo.org).



## Choosing a Doctor

Having a good relationship with your baby's health care provider is important. Start looking for a health care provider for your baby by talking to other parents and/or asking your own primary care provider for a referral.

Call the providers you're most interested in and arrange a meeting during your pregnancy. This will give you the chance to see if you get along with the provider—it's also a great opportunity to ask questions about the baby.

After you've given birth, the most important test of a good health care provider is how they care for your baby and respond to your concerns. If you're unhappy with the care, talk to the provider directly. If the problem can't be resolved, don't hesitate to find someone else.

## Prepare Your Older Children

The coming arrival of a new brother or sister will bring mixed emotions for your older children. Try to include them in as much of the preparations for the new baby as possible. Show them pictures of themselves when they were babies. Talk about how special it is to be a "big" sister or brother. Read books about families who have a new baby. And help them to understand: not only is caring for a new baby a lot of work, but it'll be a while before the baby will be able to play with them.

Make sure to spend one-on-one time every day with your older children. Read, play games, listen to music, or just talk together. This will show them that you're still interested in what they're doing, thinking and feeling. And remember, periods of sibling rivalry are normal—your children will love each other very much and develop a strong bond that will be with them for the rest of their lives.

## Environmental Spotlight: Health

Throughout your pregnancy, and as your child grows, it's important to pay attention to potential environmental hazards you may not know exist. Children are more susceptible to these hazards because of their small size and stage of development. Below are some things to watch out for.

### Well Water

If you get your water from a well, the Vermont Department of Health recommends three types of tests: a coliform bacteria test (kit A), an inorganic chemical screen (kit C tests including lead and nitrates) and a gross alpha test (kit RA). If these tests are positive, you or other family members can get sick. For information on water testing, call the Vermont Public Health Laboratory at, 800-660-9997.

## A Message for Dads

Your wife or partner needs your support, but pregnancy is also an important time for you. There's a lot to learn about pregnancy, birth, the postpartum period and caring for a newborn. Here are some ways to share in the excitement and get the support you need:

- Attend pre-natal checkups and childbirth education classes with your partner.
- Talk with your partner and your friends and relatives about being a parent.
- Talk to your baby. Unborn babies can hear your voice and may learn to enjoy your favorite music.
- Learn about caring for an infant—pregnant mothers may be very focused on getting through labor and birth.
- Discuss time off work with your partner and employer.
- Encourage your partner to eat healthy foods and take care of herself. Getting healthy is something you can do together.

### Lead

Lead is a highly toxic metal that has been used in products, like paint. Homes built before 1978 may have lead paint—don't try to remove it yourself. Lead can also be present in water pipes (use cold water for cooking). Lead exposure in pregnancy can increase the risk of miscarriage, premature birth, still birth or low birth weight. It can also cause permanent learning disabilities in a child. For more information about lead paint removal or lead in general, call the Vermont Office of Environmental Health, 800-439-8550.



### Mercury in fish

Fish caught in Vermont waters and bought in the grocery store contain varying amounts of mercury. Mercury can cause developmental damage in a fetus; however, fish is a good source of protein and low in fat. To find out about guidelines for eating fish during pregnancy call 1-800-439-8550 or visit [www.mercvt.org](http://www.mercvt.org).

## Help at "Touchpoints"

The first few months after giving birth can be overwhelming. You're trying to get to know and understand your infant, as well as feel comfortable in your new role as a parent. After a while, things will begin to settle down for your family—but don't expect the calm to last—at each new stage of development you and your baby will experience changes.

Each new task your baby learns—sleeping through the night, eating solid foods, crawling, walking—may take all of her energy, as well as yours. For a short time during each new learning period, your baby's behavior may seem to fall apart. These times are called "touchpoints" by Dr. T. Barry Brazelton.

When a baby reaches a "Touchpoint" that causes you and your family stress, it's a good time to talk to your baby's health care provider. If you need support, Healthy Babies, Kids & Families services are available beginning in pregnancy and throughout your child's first five years (see back page for more information). These times can be challenging, but they are also opportunities to understand your child's development more deeply and become more confident in your parenting skills.

