

♥ WELCOME! ♥

Your whole self is welcome here.
Thank you for honoring me with your trust.

As your midwife-partner, I strive to help you protect, nourish and love yourself through pregnancy, birth, early parenting and beyond. Please feel free to bring your parenting partner, children and/or additional family members, as well as questions, issues, thoughts, hopes and fears.

Below is an evolving summary of what I've learned from life, health, midwifery, and more than a thousand babies born at home.

Food, Drink, Herbs and Supplements

There are many excellent books, podcasts and websites on nutrition in pregnancy. There's no perfect or one-size-fits-all regime or diet. Your taste, needs and routines may change dramatically over the course of pregnancy and in the months after birth.

The bottom line is: listen to your body and fill up on [real, well-sourced food](#). Center your meals and snacks around proteins and healthy fats – eggs, meats, fish, avocados, seeds, nuts, seed/nut butters, whole-fat dairy, quinoa, etc. Add in whole, unrefined carbs – veggies, berries, legumes, grains, fruits. When we eat this way, our cravings for sweets and “fillers” decrease or disappear, and a lot of important health bases get covered (more below). Desserts or sweets get to be enjoyed as “treats.”

Water Our bodies need a lot of water in pregnancy and even more during lactation. Being low on fluids can worsen your nausea in 1st trimester and cause you to feel tired and foggy. Low fluids may increase muscle cramps, restless legs, urinary tract infections, constipation and hemorrhoids. Water supports increased metabolism, your growing baby, expanding blood volume and milk supply.

Aim for at least 64 ounces (four 16-ounce glasses) of water each day. Limit pure juices and skip sodas – these are concentrated carbs that put us on a sugar roller-coaster and can worsen nausea and vomiting. Dark leafy green herbal teas (raspberry leaf, alfalfa, nettle, etc.) are rich in micro-nutrients and are great replacements for juice and soda, as well as nice alternatives to plain water. Steep herbs in a jar on the counter over night to get their full nutritional benefits. I recommend these herbs all through pregnancy.

Protein The more protein you eat, the better you'll feel, because protein in snacks and meals keeps your blood sugar more even. Try to front-load your day with protein – protein-rich smoothies, eggs, nuts/nut butters, yogurt, cheese, etc. Protein snacks before bed are important to help maintain sugar levels through the night and will minimize morning sickness.

Nausea, Vomiting and Weight Gain 1st-trimester symptoms typically kick in at about 5 weeks and don't lessen until about 10-11 weeks. By 14 weeks, most people feel like themselves again. During 1st trimester, babies grow on nutrients that your body brought into pregnancy, so don't stress over foods

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that aren't as healthy as you'd like. In 1st trimester, eat whatever appeals and stays down! Your baby grows rapidly in 1st trimester, making you crave easy, fast energy sources. Try to eat at least every two hours and include a protein at every snack/meal. Graze around the clock and **don't worry about weight gain**. Weight gain in pregnancy is very uneven. Typically, I don't even track weights (unless there is a true reason to), because numbers don't tell the most important story.

Some people try cannabis to manage their nausea and appetite. Unfortunately, cannabis lowers blood sugar and can actually worsen the nausea-vomiting cycle. Thankfully, the legalization of cannabis allows more [research](#) to be done around pregnancy/breastfeeding, and findings are continually coming in. Cannabis appears to pass easily through the placenta, as well as through breastmilk. There is evidence that cannabis is a phyto-estrogen, an endocrine disruptor. Use in pregnancy correlates with increased anxiety levels in children. In labor, cannabinoids bind to oxytocin receptors in the brain and uterine lining and can lead to receptor competition or desensitization, in turn possibly leading to a longer, more irregular labor.

Supplements to Consider

- **PRENATAL VITAMINS** Most people choose to take a daily prenatal vitamin. I recommend organic food-based vitamins because they are better absorbed and free of artificial dyes and fillers.
- **PROBIOTICS** Probiotics in foods (see below) and supplements have been shown to decrease inflammation, yeast, bacterial vaginosis, preterm labor, hypertension, preeclampsia and the presence of GBS bacteria (more below). I recommend a daily supplement with 15 billion or more organisms per capsule. Florajen's Digestion formula has an excellent track record. If you tested positive for GBS in the past or have a history of repeated antibiotic use, you may wish to consider taking a probiotic 2-3 times/day.
- **VITAMIN D3** Vitamin D3 reduces inflammation, promotes calcium absorption, immune function, skin health and cognitive function. Generally, pregnant women need 2000-4000 IUs daily. I recommend testing your D level to help refine optimal dose.
- **MAGNESIUM** Up to 325mg/day of magnesium can prevent or lessen leg and foot cramps, restless legs, constipation and/or hemorrhoids, and cramps after childbirth. Eating [magnesium-rich foods](#) can be enough. 3-4 cups of epsom salts (mag sulfate) in a bath can be another significant source of magnesium (bath salts draw water out of the body, so drink lots during and after!). Natural Calm Magnesium is a popular oral supplement, if needed.
- **OMEGA 3s** These are essential fatty acids that our bodies do not make – we must eat them. While you can buy good oral supplements, you can also get them in a diet rich in walnuts, ground flax seeds, hulled hemp seeds, chia seeds, pumpkin seeds, foods and drinks from pasture-grazed animals and fish. Fatty cold-water fish, 1-2 times/week are safest. These include: mackerel; sardines; salmon – for canned, Deming's Red Sockeye & Trader Joe's Sockeye are best; **light** (not white!) tuna – Trader Joe's Skipjack & Genova's Yellowfin are best.
- [Consumer Lab](#) is a professional independent research testing lab for foods and supplements that I subscribe to. I'd be happy to check out specific brands that you may be curious about.

Butts and Guts

“A newborn is a bacterial sponge...” -[National Institutes of Health](#)

Trillions of bacteria live on our skin and line all the mucous membranes of our bodies (eyes, nose, mouth, throat, gut, vagina). Collectively, these bacteria make up **a universe called your microbiome**. It is a more or less resilient universe that protects you from overgrowth of harmful bacteria and viruses. This unseen universe also facilitates countless additional bodily processes, both physical and emotional. Nurturing it can help improve thinking, mood, skin, digestion, immunity and more, at the same time help prevent or control illness and disease, including preterm labor and birth.

Feed your microbiome Eat pre- and probiotic foods, that means living foods that keep your bacterial universe alive and well. These include whole, fibrous foods (garlic, onions, broccoli, less ripe bananas, cabbages, leeks, etc.) and fermented, soured, cultured, and raw foods and drinks (kimchee, krauts, kefir, yogurt, kombucha, tempeh, raw cheeses, milk, etc.). Your choices should appeal to you and be **safely sourced**. Listen to your body if they feel too strong.

Protect your microbiome Avoid depleting your bacterial universe. You risk depleting your microbiome when you use: antibiotics and antibacterial products; medicated, antiseptic or antibacterial shampoos, soaps and wipes; new clothes and linens before washing them (they're treated with chemical irritants and endocrine disruptors, such as formaldehyde and flame retardants); detergents with fragrances, whiteners or brighteners; dryer sheets (emit pthalates); and some essential oils (essential oils are powerful plant chemicals). Washing your hands with friction and plain soap and water is almost always adequate.

[Protect your vaginal microbiome](#) Avoid unnecessary vaginal products and procedures, including douching and shaving; avoid scented and treated “feminine hygiene” products; avoid scented and anti-bacterial soaps and bath products; avoid flavored, scented, and antibacterial lubes and sex toys.

All of the above precautions will protect your baby's microbiome as well. Skin-to-skin time with your baby, breastfeeding and breastmilk will further develop your baby's immune and organ systems.

Emotions and Activities

In pregnancy, your senses and emotions may be stronger than ever before. Listen to them! They're what make you the ultimate protector of your developing child.

During periods of stress, tension or anxiety, I recommend a simple coping technique: talk to your baby. It doesn't matter if your baby can't yet understand words or even hear (though fetal hearing is developed by 26 weeks, and your baby can recognize your voice by 3rd trimester!). Name your feelings and remind your baby that they are healthy, loved and safe. For example: “I am feeling really anxious/sad/upset/worried right now. But you're ok, baby. You're safe. It's not your fault.” Use your baby's name, if you have one. When we put words to our feelings, sometimes the feelings seem more manageable. When we say calming words out loud, it's as if we're saying them to ourselves. Your mouth, jaw and shoulders relax. A calming connection with your baby comes full circle. When you remix your internal hormonal cocktail this way, your baby may feel more relaxed too.

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Stress research has shown that this simple technique reduces blood pressure, heart rate, and stress hormones in pregnant people and their babies, before and after birth. It can begin a lifetime of emotional openness with your child. Furthermore, all techniques that promote sphincter and muscle relaxation can help optimize fetal positioning before and during labor.

If you are experiencing more sustained stress, anxiety or depression, please reach out. The Madison area is rich in excellent perinatal resources. I can offer recommendations if needed.

Sleep Considering the 24/7 work you're doing to build a whole new human being, it's amazing you can do anything BUT sleep! If you can, let yourself nap and go to bed whenever you feel the need to.

Gradually during pregnancy, your wise body and baby will reshape your sleep patterns to those of a breastfeeding parent. Your definition of "good sleep" may change from a solid 8+ hours, to 8 hours spread over 24 hours, in 1-4-hour chunks. It may help to change up routines temporarily and go to bed earlier, sleep alone or in a different bed. Practice tricks for getting yourself back to sleep after night wakings, such as snacks at the bedside, eye mask, white noise, no lights, etc. Nap during the day if you had a disrupted night. Sleep studies advise: keep the bedroom as dark as possible, no screens 1-2 hours before bedtime (if you must, turn on a blue-light filter), use a nightlight or flashlight if you need light during the night.

Strength and Balance Daily physical activity can optimize sleep, mood, circulation, digestion, metabolism, stamina and body/baby alignment. Keep making time for it! Pregnancy hormones and a growing baby can make joints increasingly loose and sore. If you've had a baby before, the soreness may set in sooner. Avoid activities that involve lifting, straining or pain. Instead: walk, bike, swim, garden, dance, have sex, do yoga or (light) house-cleaning.

Several area gyms offer salt water pools, which can feel great and limit chlorine. If you swim, remember to drink lots of fluids during and after and to shower thoroughly afterwards. [Float pods](#) are also safe in pregnancy. Yoga, massage, acupuncture and/or chiropractic are popular and safe in pregnancy. The Madison area is rich in these resources, and I'd be happy to offer recommendations.

Varicose Veins, Hemorrhoids and Constipation These three often go together. Hemorrhoids and varicose veins can be hereditary. Even with careful activity and diet, you may develop them in ankle, leg, groin and/or vulvar areas. Avoid lifting, straining, prolonged standing/sitting, and sitting with bent knees or crossed legs/ankles. Circulatory constriction or back-flow is like backed-up plumbing, it puts extra pressure on vulnerable vein walls.

Helpful measures: mindful body mechanics; compression socks, stockings or leggings; belly bands and/or vulvar supports; warm baths (with or without epsom salts); creams containing horse chestnut and witch hazel; constipation-preventing foods and supplements (see above); natural laxatives, such as **whole** flax or chia seeds (can sprinkle on food, throw in smoothies); daily flax tea – place 2 tbsp **whole** flaxseeds in a cup of boiling water, steep at least 20 minutes, sweeten to taste and consume (some people like to add oats or another grain and make a warm cereal).

Your Village Whether you birth at home or in a hospital, you have a spectrum of options for parenting support. Which resources and labor partners to choose is best determined by you, rather than by generic lists or external expectations. Your support system may include a doula, parents, friends, siblings, pets, classes, written birth plan, parent/baby groups, lactation resources, books, films and podcasts. Favorite homebirther podcasts include: [Evidence Based Birth](#), [The Birth Hour](#), [The Home Birth Midwife](#), and [Milk Minute](#).

Engage resources for varying contingencies – your labor might be short and intense, or it might last a day or more and be very exhausting. It might take place at night or during the day (or both), entirely at home or partly in a hospital. Attendants tend to welcome jobs – child care, picture-taking, cooking, cleaning, pet-sitting and/or errand-running.

I welcome siblings at prenatal visits as well as at labor and birth. Young children (and pets) typically do well with normal biological/bodily processes. Beforehand, they might enjoy books, videos and/or labor role-play. If you plan to include your child(ren) at your birth, consider including them at prenatal visits. Like adult labor attendants, children tend to enjoy jobs, such as holding a flashlight or providing sips of water.

If you are having a baby shower or registry, consider asking for services instead of/in addition to supplies. These might include a diaper service, house-cleaning service, meal train, professional massage, birth/postpartum doula or photographer.

Home Birth Supplies

Below is a list of birth, postpartum, and baby supplies that I recommend you have on hand by our 36-week home visit. It is a 2-part list:

1. Birth Kit – customized personal items you will need during labor and the days after birth, may be ordered pre-assembled [online](#) or be assembled by you;
2. Baby and Household Items – you may already have these (see list below).

1. Birth Kit

Almost everything you'll need to purchase for birth itself is just [one click away](#) at [RadiantBelly.com](#).

Contents of this kit include: a perineal squeeze bottle, a measuring tape, a non-latex cord band, organic herbs and muslin bag, mesh briefs, disposable underpads, Depends, maternity pads, kleen print card for footprints. Below these items I list a few popular optional items.

If you already have some of these items, feel free to delete those.

If you prefer to assemble your own birth kit, please be sure to have some version of all the above items in it. For the umbilical cord, I have cotton string that can be used in place of a cord band.

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For herbs, please provide **three or more of the following organic herbs** (for a total of about 1 ½ cups): calendula, comfrey, uva ursi, rosemary, lavender, sage, St. John's Wort, plantain, thyme, oregano. Feel free to use herbs from your garden, local Farmer's Market, or other supplier. Bulk herbs can be found at Willy St. Coop, Community Pharmacy or online.

2. Baby and Household Items

Please place all above items with the items below in one portable receptacle (such as a laundry basket).

- 6 or more clean large towels plus a small stack of clean washcloths & hand towels (if new, please wash in dye-free, fragrance-free, brightener-free detergent before use)
- 3 or more washed (as above) baby blankets
- 1-2 diapers (parents often prefer disposable for the early days)
- 1-2 bottles of Hydrogen Peroxide (for stain removal from linens and carpets)
- 1 clean cookie sheet or tray (for instruments, used/old is fine)
- 2 large plastic trash bags (one for wet linens, one for trash)
- a large plastic drop cloth (for protection of surfaces) – paint stores have inexpensive ones, a waterproof shower curtain or picnic tablecloth also works well
- a strong flashlight (backup for mine)
- favorite energy/electrolyte drinks and snacks (avoid too sweet, crunchy, or chewy)
- magnesium and/or ibuprofen and rice sock/hot water bottle/heating pad for cramping after birth (especially if this is baby #2 or more)
- magnesium to help prevent constipation
- if you plan to use the labor/birth pool, please buy a new [rubber hose with non-lead fittings](#) plus the necessary adapter for attaching to your preferred indoor faucet (most people remove their shower-head). Ace Hardware typically stocks a suitable rubber hose and is helpful regarding adapters. Turn your water heater to maximum in early labor (this will make the hot water supply go further). The hose can be used for more than one birth, but any used hose must be sterilized. You can sterilize a hose by completely submerging it in diluted bleach solution – 1 cup of bleach per 1 gallon of water – for a minimum of 1 hour. Leave submerged until ready for use in labor.

♥ Thanks for reading! ♥