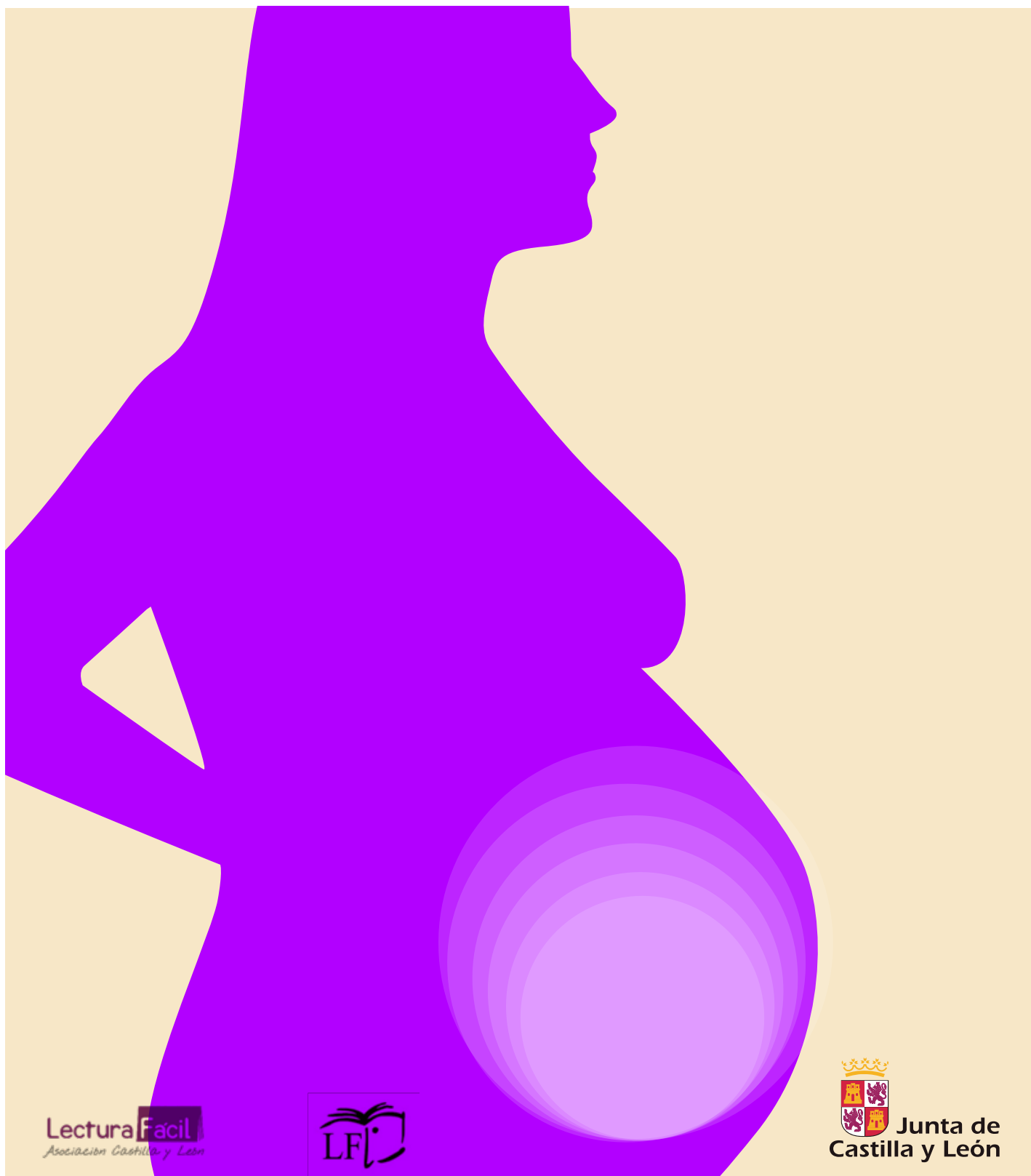


What do i need to know to help me give birth to a healthy baby?

20 important questions and answers



1. Is there a risk of my baby being born with a congenital defect?

Yes, in all pregnancies there is a risk of between 2 and five percent that the baby may be born with a congenital defect. In other words, out of every 100 pregnancies, between 2 and 5 babies are born with a congenital defect.

Congenital defect

this refers to problems that may occur during pregnancy. The cause may be genetic or the result of an infection, exposure to toxic substances or lack of nutrients.

2. Is there anything I can do to reduce the risk?

Yes, there are **preventive measures** and attitudes that can help reduce the risk of congenital defects and that should be taken before getting pregnant.

preventive measures

actions that can be taken to prevent diseases and protect our health.

3. Why before getting pregnant?

Because the baby's organs start forming during the first weeks of pregnancy, before you know you are expecting.

Exposure to any risk factors during those first few weeks may cause congenital defects or a **miscarriage**.

To prevent this from happening, and to protect the baby right from the start, the best thing is to **plan your pregnancy**; to behave as if you were already pregnant and follow the advice given in this leaflet.

Exposure

A situation in which harm may occur.

Risk factors

Circumstances or situations that increase the likelihood of contracting a disease.

Miscarriage

The spontaneous loss of a baby before month 5 of pregnancy.

Plan

Draw up a series of ideas in order to meet an objective.

4. Is that why I have to take folic acid before becoming pregnant?

Yes, because there are some congenital defects, like **Spina bifida**, that happen during the first few weeks of pregnancy that can be prevented by taking folic acid.

If you want to have a baby, you should take a folic acid tablet every day before getting pregnant and until the end of the first trimester of your pregnancy.

Your doctor will tell you if you need to take it for longer and also how much you should take.

Spina bifida

A congenital defect that affects the spine and spinal cord.



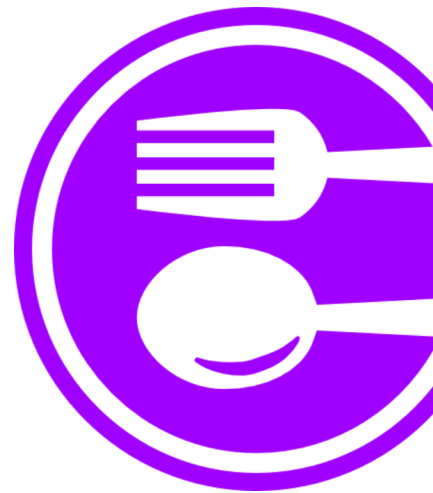
5. Do I have to be careful of what I eat?

Yes, if you want to get pregnant or are already expecting, you should follow a balanced diet to make sure you are getting all the **nutrients** you need.

You must not eat raw or undercooked meat or raw cured and cold meats as they may be contaminated and cause **toxoplasmosis**.

You shouldn't eat liver either, as any toxic products that the animal may have eaten are accumulated in the liver.

Ask your doctor if you have any questions



Nutrients

Substances in foods that are necessary for your body's functions.

Toxoplasmosis

This disease is caused by a parasite that may cause congenital defects in the baby if contracted during pregnancy.

6. Is the parents' age a risk for the baby?

Yes, the risk is greater and more frequent if the mother is over 35 years old.

For instance, there is a greater risk of the baby being born with Down syndrome.

When it is the father who is over 35, the risk is lower.

7. Can the risks associated with the parents' age be avoided?

Yes, by planning pregnancies at younger ages.

When the mother is over 35, a prenatal diagnosis can be made.

This is a medical test to find out if the baby has a congenital defect.

8. Is it true that babies are more at risk if their parents are related?

Yes, because we all have some type of **anomalous gene** and when the parents are from the same family, they are more likely to share the same anomalous gene. The parents can pass on this anomalous gene and the baby may be born with a congenital defect. For this reason, parents from the same family should consult their doctor.

Anomalous gene

a gene that may develop into a disease.

9. If I have previously had a pregnancy with congenital defects, am I more at risk of the same thing happening with another pregnancy?

The risk of a congenital defect being repeated depends essentially on the type of congenital defect. It also depends if the cause is known or if the parents are related. A couple that have had a baby with a congenital defect and want to have another baby should always ask their doctor.

10. Are the mother's infections a risk for pregnancy?

Yes, if the mother has certain diseases while she is pregnant, like chicken pox, German measles, toxoplasmosis or cytomegalovirus, there is a higher risk of the baby having a congenital defect. There are other diseases, like AIDS or hepatitis, which do not increase the risk of a congenital defect, although the mother can pass them onto the baby.

Cytomegalovirus

This is a virus from the Herpes family of viruses that may cause congenital defects.

11. What can I do to prevent the risk of infection during pregnancy?

The first thing is to visit your doctor before you get pregnant.

The medical will ask for an analysis to find out whether you have already had the diseases that increase the risk of a congenital defect.

If you have not had them, and a vaccination is available, you must be vaccinated 3 months before becoming pregnant.

If there is no vaccination, the doctor will tell you which preventive measures you should take.



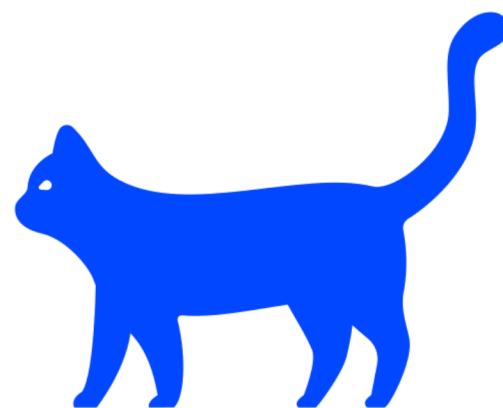
12. Can I be around cats while I'm pregnant?

Cats can transmit toxoplasmosis.

If you have not had it before getting pregnant, you should avoid contact with cats, and especially with cat faeces.

You should also wash your hands thoroughly after touching them, not let them lick you and always wear gloves when touching their things such as their bed or litter trays.

If you enjoy or work in gardening, you must always wear gloves and wash your hands thoroughly when you have finished, because the soil may contain the remains of cat faeces.



13. If I have a chronic disease, is my baby at risk?

It depends on the chronic disease you have.

The best way of preventing risks for the baby is to tell your doctor that you would like to get pregnant, follow his/her advice as well as the treatment for your disease.

14. ¿What should I do if I fall ill during pregnancy?

Whenever you experience a health problem, you must always talk to your doctor, even though you don't think it is very serious.

When you are pregnant, you must NOT take any medication that has not been prescribed by your doctor.

Nor must you change the medication you take, the amount or when you take it.

15. What should I do if I need an x-ray during my pregnancy?

You must not have x-rays if you are pregnant, as exposure to very high **doses of radiation** means there is a risk of congenital defects for the baby.

Don't worry if you need to have an x-ray while you are pregnant.

Tell your doctor that you are expecting so that he/she can protect you and make sure you are exposed to low doses of radiation.

Doses of radiation

This is the amount of energy absorbed when you have an x-ray.

16. Can I drink alcohol while I am pregnant?

No, you must not drink alcohol when you are pregnant.

Alcohol increases the risk of congenital defects and is the first cause of mental retardation in babies not related to genetic factors.

What's more, alcohol is also a cause of hyperactivity.



17. Can I take drugs while I am pregnant?

No, you must not take drugs if you are pregnant because of the risk of congenital defects and other complications for the baby, especially if you consume cocaine or mix several types of drugs.

18. Can I drink coffee while I am pregnant?

Yes, if you are pregnant, you can drink coffee, although you mustn't have too much.

The maximum recommended amount is 3 cups a day, because it is believed that caffeine may provoke miscarriages.

There are other drinks like tea and soft drinks with cola that also contain caffeine.



19. Can I smoke while I am pregnant?

No, you must not smoke during pregnancy.

However, if you do, make sure you smoke fewer than 10 cigarettes a day.

Smoking more than 10 cigarettes a day means that the baby is likely to have a lower birth weight and may also have breathing problems.

If you are pregnant, you must always avoid spaces with smoke, because some of these effects may occur in the babies of women who are **passive smokers**.



Passive smokers

Are people that do not smoke, but breathe in the cigarette smoke of others.

20. Is it true that some jobs can cause risks during pregnancy?

Yes, some jobs may be a risk for pregnancy.

To prevent them, there is an occupational risk prevention law that states that pregnant women must not work in conditions that are a risk for their pregnancy and may change their job in certain situations.

The working conditions of the father must also be suitable to prevent fertility problems for couples.

The information included in this leaflet is in a very summarised format. If you have any questions or would like more information, call 91 82 22 24 36 which is the information phone line for pregnant women, staffed by doctors with expertise in this field. It is free-of-charge, and if you wish, you can also receive a written report.