



— YOUR GUIDE TO —
**WOMEN'S
HEALTH**
TEXAS WIC





Your Guide to Better Health

Being a mom can be very exciting but also very tiring. How good would it feel if you were rested? What would a day be like if you felt like being more active? Think about the joy of family life with everything in balance.

Try some of the tips in this guide for better health. Taking care of yourself sets a good example for your children. When you do what is best for you, they do better, too. Go step-by-step toward a new, active you. A little change can make a big difference to you and your family.
Be your best and enjoy a better life.

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AFTER BABY

CONGRATULATIONS!

Having a baby is one of the most rewarding times of your life. With so many things to think about, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. To care for your family, you need to take care of yourself too.

SLEEP

Newborns sleep a lot, but they do not sleep like adults. Most newborns take many short naps during the day and night instead of sleeping long periods at a time. This can make it hard for parents to get enough sleep. Below are some things you can try to help you get enough rest:

- If you can, sleep when your baby sleeps.
- Ask friends and family to help you care for the baby, especially in the first few weeks.
- Make a list of chores that need to be done. When someone offers to help, let them pick from the list so you can focus on taking care of you and the baby.
- Find a new mom group near you to get support and suggestions from women who know what you are going through.
- Do not drink a lot of coffee or energy drinks. Caffeine can pass into breastmilk and disrupt sleep for you and your baby.
- Try to stay positive. Know that the baby will sleep for longer periods of time in a couple of months.

MENTAL HEALTH

After having your baby, you may feel a mix of emotions. Giving birth, little sleep, and worries about caring for your baby can all make you feel a little unlike yourself. This is sometimes called the “baby blues.” Some signs include:

- Crying easily for no reason.
- Trouble eating and sleeping.
- Being very worried about caring for the baby.
- Feeling overwhelmed.
- Having a short temper.

Many women have these feelings and they usually go away as the baby gets more settled. Help from family and friends, resting, eating healthy foods, exercising, and getting out of the house are all important in helping with these feelings. If you feel sad or upset for more than two weeks, talk to your doctor, you may have what is called postpartum depression.

GETTING BACK TO A HEALTHY WEIGHT

After you've had a chance to rest and recover you can start to think about getting to a healthy weight. There is no special diet for moms after having a baby; it is really a matter of eating healthy and exercising. Healthy meals include whole grains, low fat dairy, fruits and vegetables, plant-based protein such as beans and tofu, and lean meats.

Everywhere you look there are diet plans and weight-loss products that promise quick results. Be careful of diet plans, products, or pills that advertise:

- **Quick weight loss** – if you lose weight too quickly, it may harm your body instead of helping. Your body may lose muscle and water instead of fat. Healthy plans encourage a loss of only 1-2 pounds per week. Slow, steady weight loss is more likely to last.
- **Magic foods or supplements** – there are no magic foods or pills that will melt fat away. There is nothing that will burn fat while you sleep. Check with your doctor before you start any supplement. Keep in mind that “natural” does not always mean safe.

- **Strict (or expensive) meal plans** – be careful of diets that tell you to eat only one type of food or to stay away from an entire food group. Some programs will ask you to buy their meals, but it may be cheaper to make them at home.
- **No need to exercise** – regular physical activity is important for weight loss and helping you stay healthy. The key to exercise is to find something you enjoy and then aim for 30-60 minutes of activity on most days of the week.

Remember eating healthy meals and following an exercise plan will help you nourish your body while giving you energy and helping you lose weight. Start by eating smaller amounts of food or cutting out unhealthy foods like sodas, desserts, or fried foods. Be patient, these small changes will have lasting effects instead of diets that promise fast weight loss.



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is important for bone and heart health, flexibility, and muscle tone. It not only improves health, but it can also improve mood and sleep. Physical activity can be something as simple as walking the dog, playing with the kids in the park, raking leaves, cleaning the house, dancing, taking the stairs instead of the elevator, or parking far away when going to stores or work.

Before starting any new activity:

- Check with your doctor, especially if you are pregnant or just had a baby.
- Don't overdo it, start slow.
- Always warm up with a light activity before exercising and be sure to cool down and stretch after.
- Drink plenty of water.

KEEP MOVING

Did you know that sitting for long periods of time can lead to multiple health problems and weight gain? To keep your blood flowing, your mind working at its best, and prevent your muscles from tightening, do some sort of movement throughout the day.

- Stand up or walk around when you talk on the phone.
- Go for a walk during part of your lunch break.
- Take a stretch break every hour.
- Do jumping jacks, sit ups, or walk in place to make watching TV active.
- Drink plenty of water.



A HEALTHY YOU

5 STEPS TO EAT WELL

There are many reasons to be the healthiest you – to look and feel your best, to set a good example for your children, and to lower your chances of getting diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and weak bones. Take these five steps to live well for you and your family.

- 1 Be realistic.** Make small changes in what you eat. This can be as easy as switching from whole or 2% milk to 1% or fat-free milk. No two women are alike; give your body time to adjust after having a baby.
- 2 Be adventurous.** Snacks are a great time to try new fruits and vegetables.
- 3 Be flexible.** It's all about balance. Eat a lighter lunch if you are going out for a big dinner. Look for easy ways to make healthier choices like sharing a meal with a friend.
- 4 Be sensible.** Enjoy all foods, just don't overdo it. Eat slowly, enjoy each bite, and listen to your body – eat when you are hungry and stop when you feel full. Turn off the TV to focus on food and family time.
- 5 Be energized.** Breakfast is the best way to begin your day – giving you energy, brain power, and a healthy start.



MEAL PLANNING MADE EASY

Do you struggle with figuring out how to make a healthy plate? MyPlate makes it simple to understand. Half of your plate will be full of fruits and vegetables. The other half of your plate will be split between whole grains and lean protein foods like chicken, turkey, or fish. Try to include dairy with your meal, choosing low-fat options.

THINGS TO AVOID

You want the best for your health and the health of your family. Now that you are a parent, you are sharing your home, love, and time with your children. Things like drugs, alcohol, and tobacco make it hard to care for your children. To be the best parent you can be, avoid these substances. Remember that your children want to be like you, so you have the chance to set a good example. If you need help quitting drugs, alcohol, or tobacco, check out the resource list on page 17.





IMPORTANT NUTRIENTS AND HOW TO GET THEM

We need many nutrients, but certain ones are especially important for women's health.



IRON

Iron has many important jobs like making healthy blood, giving you energy, and protecting you from sickness and infections. Low iron levels are common in women, so it is important that you aim to eat plenty of iron rich foods like:

- Beef, chicken, and pork
- Dried beans, tofu, and cereals with iron

Ways to Increase Your Iron

- Eat iron foods with vitamin C like tomatoes, bell peppers, strawberries, oranges, or broccoli.
- Eat two iron foods together like chicken and beans.
- Cook in cast-iron pots or skillets.
- Avoid tea or coffee with iron foods. These drinks make it harder for your body to use iron.

CALCIUM

Women of all ages need calcium to keep their bones healthy and strong. But most women do not get enough calcium. After having your baby, it is even more important to get enough calcium since pregnancy may have lowered your body's calcium.

Dairy products like milk, yogurt, cheese, and cottage cheese have the highest amounts of calcium, but other foods can also help women reach their daily needs. Some other examples of foods with calcium:

- Black beans, black-eyed peas, and other beans
- Firm tofu, tempeh
- Fish with edible bones (canned sardines and salmon)
- Breads and juices with added calcium



FIBER

Fiber is in plant foods like fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain breads and cereals. It is not in meats, dairy, or refined (white) grains.

Fiber is important for a healthy digestive system. It helps prevent constipation and can make you feel full faster. Add fiber to your diet slowly, and be sure to drink plenty of water.

By making a few small changes to the foods you choose, you can increase your fiber.

FIBER-FRIENDLY FOOD SWAPS

-  **Replace White Rice with Brown Rice** 
-  **Replace White Bread with Whole Wheat** 
-  **Replace a Donut with a Bran Muffin** 
-  **Replace Sour Cream with Hummus** 
-  **Replace Pudding with Applesauce** 



FOLIC ACID

Folic acid is a B vitamin that helps your body make new cells. It is very important during pregnancy because it helps protect against brain and spinal cord birth defects (called neural tube defects). Folic acid is needed in the first 30 days of pregnancy – usually when women don't even know they are pregnant. This is why all women should get enough folic acid so if they do become pregnant, they'll have enough in the early weeks. Foods that have folate (the natural form of folic acid) are:

- Broccoli, asparagus, lima beans, spinach, and turnip greens
- Fruits like oranges, tangerines, and grapefruit
- Dried beans and peas
- Nuts and sunflower seeds

WATER

Water is a nutrient we tend to forget about but is needed for good health. Water keeps the body balanced, keeps your temperature normal, protects your body's tissues, and gets rid of waste. Your body will need more water in hot weather, if you are sick, and when exercising.

Tips to help you drink more water:

- Drink water or a low-calorie beverage with every snack and meal.
- Put fresh or frozen fruit in your water to add flavor.
- Keep a bottle of water with you in your car, at your desk, and in your bag.





PLANNING FOR YOUR NEXT BABY

If you just had a baby, it may be too soon to think about the next, but planning anything in life helps you know what action to take, how long it will take, and how much it will cost. Family planning is no different. Babies require a lot of time, energy, and money so you may want to start thinking about your plan before you have your next baby. This will help you have a happier and less stressful experience.

SPACING BETWEEN PREGNANCIES

Deciding how many children and how far apart in age means you can plan ahead so that you and your baby are healthy. Planning the spacing of your babies gives your body time to prepare for your next baby. By waiting at least 18 months before your next baby, you will have time for your body to fully heal and reach a healthy weight.

HEALTHY WEIGHT

Did you know being at a healthy weight (not overweight and not underweight) can make pregnancy and labor go more smoothly? Your baby is also more likely to be healthy and face fewer weight problems later in life.

IMPORTANCE OF PRENATAL VITAMINS

It is a great idea to start taking prenatal vitamins before you are pregnant for a few reasons. Your body only uses about half the folate in foods. But you will use all of the folate in vitamin supplements, like your prenatal vitamin. These vitamins may also have extra iron, calcium, Vitamin D, DHA, and more. These nutrients are all important for your future baby.



HEALTHY BABIES START WITH HEALTHY MOMS

To be healthy for your family, you need to take time to take care of yourself. As a healthy mom you will have more energy for your children and can set a good example.

DENTAL HEALTH

“I know that brushing my teeth is important but sometimes I get too busy and forget.”

A lot of people do not put dental health on the top of their list. But did you know that your dental health can affect your whole body? By taking care of your teeth, you are preventing other health issues while providing a good example for your kids.

- Brush your teeth at least two times a day.
- Floss every day.
- Get a new toothbrush every 3-4 months.
- Eat a healthy diet full of fruits and vegetables.
- Visit a dentist every 6 months.

YEARLY VISITS

“If I am healthy, then I don’t need to visit the doctor every year for a check-up.”

It is a good thing for every woman to visit their doctor each year for two reasons – to get a regular physical and to have a well-woman’s exam. Both of these yearly visits can give you an update on your overall wellness. They’ll help catch issues before they become problems and give you a chance to ask your doctor questions. Checking in with your doctor regularly gives you the best head start to a long and healthy life.

BONE HEALTH

“Besides drinking milk, what can I do to strengthen my bones?”

Great question! Keeping your bones strong and healthy now will help prevent them from becoming weak later in life. Calcium plays an important role in keeping your bones strong. There are many foods other than milk that have calcium; you can find these foods on page 9. Any physical activity that puts weight on your bones will strengthen them as well. Some examples are weight training, walking, hiking, jogging, climbing stairs, tennis, and dancing. Be sure to let your doctor know if other women in your family have weak bones.



RESOURCES

Alcohol & Substance Abuse Adult Substance Use Resources

www.hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use/adult-substance-use
1-877-541-7905 or 211

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator
findtreatment.samhsa.gov
1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Smoking Cessation
Texas Department of State Health Services Quitline
www.yesquit.org
1-877-YES-QUIT (937-7848)

Baby Blues/Postpartum Depression
Postpartum Support International (PSI)
www.postpartum.net
Helpline: 1-800-944-4773

The PSI Helpline does not handle emergencies. Call 911 if you are in an emergency.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Breastfeeding
Breastmilk Counts
www.breastmilkcounts.com
Hotline: 1-855-550-6667

Domestic Violence
National Domestic Violence Hotline
www.thehotline.org
Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Healthy Recipes and Nutrition Information
www.TexasWIC.org

Visit our website at [TexasWic.org](https://www.TexasWic.org)



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