

Your local Association for



about mental retardation ... and babies

There's something you should know right from the start. Every mother runs the risk of becoming the parent of a retarded child. It can happen to anyone. But you can cut down the risk, it only requires a little self-discipline and the desire to take good care of your new friend from the beginning. Follow the advice set out here and you'll do yourself and your baby a big favour.

You are what you eat ... both of you

There's only one way to eat. Sensibly. Sensibly means well balanced ... lots of fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, lean meats and dairy products. Eat regular meals properly prepared. Sensibly doesn't mean expensively. You can eat nutritionally and still enjoy it. And usually for less than you would spend for junk food.

Look for spots before you leap

If you contact Rubella (German measles) during your first three months of pregnancy you may not be very sick yourself. But there's one chance in three that your child will suffer damage to sight, hearing or heart. And may be mentally retarded. This damage is preventable. If you have not been immunized against Rubella (German measles) and Rubeola (Red measles) you should be. You should be sure you are not pregnant when immunized and that you don't become pregnant for at least three months after.

Alcohol, Tobacco, and drugs don't mix with babies

If you're smart you'll stay away from alcohol. The hangover could last a lifetime. Tobacco really does stunt growth. Believe it or not, nicotine, combined with carbon monoxide could mean a child with a low birth weight and a greater risk of brain damage. Don't take a prescription drug without checking it out with your doctor. A medication that was safe before pregnancy could cause problems later. Be sure your doctor knows you're pregnant ... stay away from everything except what he prescribes. Finally if you're addicted to drugs ... when you're pregnant your baby will be hooked too. Worse still you could cause serious permanent injury. This includes the use of marijuana.

So, you wanna be in pictures

Don't. Not the X-ray kind at any rate. Both you and your partner should be aware of the amount of radiation exposure you have ... before conception. During pregnancy your baby can be damaged by X-ray or radiation exposure. Take special precautions during pregnancy. No X-ray without your doctors and X-ray technician knowing that you are, or could be pregnant.

Continue to see your doctor

There's no substitute for proper medical care. Doctors know what to watch out for. They'll keep an eye on your development ... and your baby's development. They'll look for signs of medical problems. And they'll supply the assurance you need that everything's going well. If you are under 18 or over 35 it's even more important that you see your doctor regularly. Your chances of complications are greater and early diagnosis is important. Don't take chances.

If mental retardation touches your life ... you are not alone

There are caring people and expert resources available and ready to help. Contact the Nipigon Association for the Mentally Retarded.

First things first ...

Before you even decide to become pregnant you should see a doctor. There are a lot of things he can tell you about having a healthy baby. And a lot of things he can do to cut down the risk of mental retardation. You can also talk to your local public health agency about care of yourself during pregnancy. They may offer pre-natal classes to help prepare you for what to expect.

1. Your doctor will check you for kidney and bladder infection, thyroid disease and diabetes. They can all cause premature birth ... which can cause mental retardation. You may think you're in perfect health. You may not be. Only your doctor can make that judgement.
2. Doctors also ask about abnormalities in the families of both parents ... and previous children. If they suspect problems they'll suggest genetic counselling. It requires first that you both have blood tests. Your doctor then can tell if you carry the risk of passing on problems to your baby. If you're already pregnant an accurate diagnosis can be made of some genetic problems, such as downs syndrome. If you do have problems the sooner you find out, the better.
3. They check you and your partner for the R.H. factor. That means looking for a certain blood element. Most people have the RH factor and they're called RH positive. Those who don't are called Rh negative. Whether you have it or not makes no difference ... but the combination of an Rh positive father, with an Rh-negative mother can cause serious Rh disease in their children. There's a vaccine that prevents the Rh disease problem ... providing your doctor knows there's a problem.
4. You'll be checked for venereal disease. And that means both you and your partner. Babies can get venereal diseases, too. Untreated syphilis in the parent often results in mental retardation in the child.

Be involved with your baby.

The more time you spend, the more love you give, the more stimulation you provide ... the quicker your child will develop. You should know what to expect of your child at each stage in life so that you don't ask too much. If you do get the feeling your child is slow to develop, get professional advice quickly. Ask your doctor, public health nurse or local association for the mentally retarded to arrange for an assessment.



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