

Unit 3 Lesson 14

You Can Learn About Pregnancy and Childbirth

Vocabulary

fertilization

uterus

pregnancy

umbilical cord

prenatal care

fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)

premature birth

labor

childbirth

bonding



Life Skills

- I will learn about pregnancy and childbirth.
- I will provide responsible care for infants and children.
- I will practice abstinence to avoid teen pregnancy and parenthood.

Do you think about becoming a parent? Do you think about the children you might have? You are not ready to become a parent. But you need to learn about pregnancy and childbirth to prepare for your future.

The Lesson Objectives

- Explain how a fertilized egg is formed and nourished.
- Discuss why health and health care are important during pregnancy.
- Describe ways parents bond with their newborn baby.
- List ways you can help provide responsible care for infants and children.
- Explain why teen pregnancy and parenthood are risky.

What You Should Know About Pregnancy

Fertilization (fuhr·tuh·luh·ZAY·shun) is the joining of an egg cell and sperm cell to make a single cell. The single cell that is formed is called the fertilized egg. The fertilized egg begins to divide right away. It will divide millions of times to become a fully developed baby. The fertilized egg grows inside the uterus. The **uterus** is a muscular organ that supports the fertilized egg during pregnancy.

Pregnancy is the time between fertilization and birth. A female is pregnant when she is expecting a baby. Her health is very important.

The mother-to-be provides the developing baby with food and oxygen. The **umbilical** (uhm·BI·li·kuhl) **cord** is a ropelike substance that connects the lining of the uterus to the baby. The mother's blood passes through the cord to the baby. It picks up wastes from the baby and carries them away.

The mother-to-be's health and health care are important. **Prenatal care** is the health care given to the mother-to-be and her unborn baby. Some physicians specialize in prenatal care. A physician might perform a test to confirm the pregnancy. The physician will set regularly scheduled examinations for the mother-to-be.

A mother-to-be has the best chance for a healthful pregnancy when:

1. she is healthy at the time she becomes pregnant;
2. she receives prenatal care;
3. she has a commitment and emotional support from the father-to-be;
4. she has healthful habits;
5. she lives in a healthful environment.

You might have heard the saying, “A pregnant female eats for two.” The mother-to-be does not need to eat twice as much. What she eats affects two people—herself and the baby. Eating healthful foods gives the baby vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients.

Any drugs the mother-to-be takes get into her bloodstream. They can affect the developing baby. Caffeine (KA-fee-n) is a drug found in chocolate, coffee, tea, some soda pops, and prescription and OTC drugs. Physicians now warn that too much caffeine can be harmful. A mother-to-be might have fewer red blood cells than usual.

Alcohol can reach the baby through the mother-to-be’s blood. **Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)**: a condition that causes birth defects in babies born to mothers who drank alcohol during pregnancy. Babies born with FAS might be mentally retarded. They might have problems with the nervous system. They might have heart problems.

If a mother-to-be uses tobacco products, nicotine can affect her baby. Nicotine is a stimulant drug. It reduces the appetite of the mother-to-be. It increases her heartbeat rate. The baby gets less oxygen. Babies born to females who smoke might be premature. **Premature birth** is the birth of a baby before it is fully developed. Premature babies have a low birth weight. They have more health problems.

A mother-to-be should be careful about the quality of the air she breathes. Whatever she breathes, the developing baby breathes. She should stay away from the cigarette smoke of others. She should not breathe household chemicals. She should not breathe products such as nail polish.

What You Should Know About Childbirth

Many classes are available for parents-to-be. These classes teach about labor and childbirth. **Labor** is a series of stages that result in the birth of the baby. **Childbirth** is the process by which the baby moves from the uterus out of the mother's body.

Classes teach parents-to-be how to care for their baby. Bonding is an important topic. **Bonding** is a closeness that develops between two people. Bonding between parents and a baby begins at birth. Soft touches, gentle words, and physical closeness help bonding. A baby benefits from bonding with its mother and father.

Fathers-to-be benefit from knowing about bonding. Fathers and mothers can begin right away to meet the emotional needs of their baby.

Responsible Ways to Care for Infants and Children

Suppose your parents or guardian are home. They ask you to help look after a younger brother or sister. Here are three ways you can provide responsible care for infants and children.

- **Allow the child to play only with toys or objects that are safe.** Children can choke on small parts that break off toys. Children can cut themselves with sharp edges. Children's hearing can be damaged by toys that make loud noises.
- **Know what the child is doing at all times.** A baby can quickly roll off a bed or couch. A young child can get into household chemicals stored in a cabinet. Even an older child can trip and fall down steps.
- **Get your parents or guardian if an emergency happens.** Know where they are at all times.



Why Teen Pregnancy and Parenthood Are Risky

Teen pregnancy is risky for many reasons. During the teen years, the pituitary gland secretes growth hormone. A teen female has a growth spurt. Her body needs extra nutrients, rest, and sleep. Because she has not finished growing, it is best not to have a baby growing inside her.

A teen is more likely than an adult to choose risk behaviors. She might smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol. She might stop these behaviors when she learns she is pregnant. But the fertilized egg has divided many times before a pregnancy is confirmed. Any drug use harms the developing baby.

A teen often lacks money for prenatal care. She might not visit a doctor regularly. She might not have blood tests and regular checkups.

Teen pregnancy and parenthood are risky. Pregnant teens usually are not married. They do not have emotional support from a committed partner. If they do marry, the divorce rate is high. To date, most teen fathers offer little support. Many teen fathers do not provide money or their time. It is difficult to raise a baby without money. It is difficult to raise a baby without a committed and loving father.

There is another reason teen pregnancy and parenthood are risky. Teen mothers and fathers often drop out of school to work full time. They might give up career goals. They are at risk for living in poverty because they might not get training or education for good jobs.

Make Responsible Decisions

- Choose abstinence.
- Wait until you complete school, can earn a living, and marry before you have a baby.

The Responsible Decision-Making Model™



Your older sister has told you she practices abstinence. You suspect her boyfriend is pressuring her to have sex. You overhear him telling her he would take care of her if she got pregnant. You are concerned about your sister.

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper. Write “Does not apply” if a question does not apply to this situation.

1. Is it healthful for your sister to stop practicing abstinence? Why or why not?
2. Is it safe for your sister to stop practicing abstinence? Why or why not?
3. Is it legal for your sister to stop practicing abstinence? Why or why not?
4. Will your sister show respect for herself if she stops practicing abstinence? Why or why not?
5. Will your parents or guardian approve if your sister stops practicing abstinence? Why or why not?
6. Will your sister demonstrate good character if she stops practicing abstinence? Why or why not?

What is the responsible decision for your sister to make in this situation? What should you say to your sister?

Lesson 14

Review

Vocabulary

Write a separate sentence using each of the vocabulary words listed on page 104.

Health Content

Write responses to the following:

1. How is a fertilized egg formed and nourished? **page 105**
2. Why is prenatal care important? **page 105**
3. How does bonding between a parent and newborn baby occur? **page 107**
4. What are three ways you can provide responsible care for infants and children? **page 107**
5. Why are teen pregnancy and parenthood risky? **page 108**