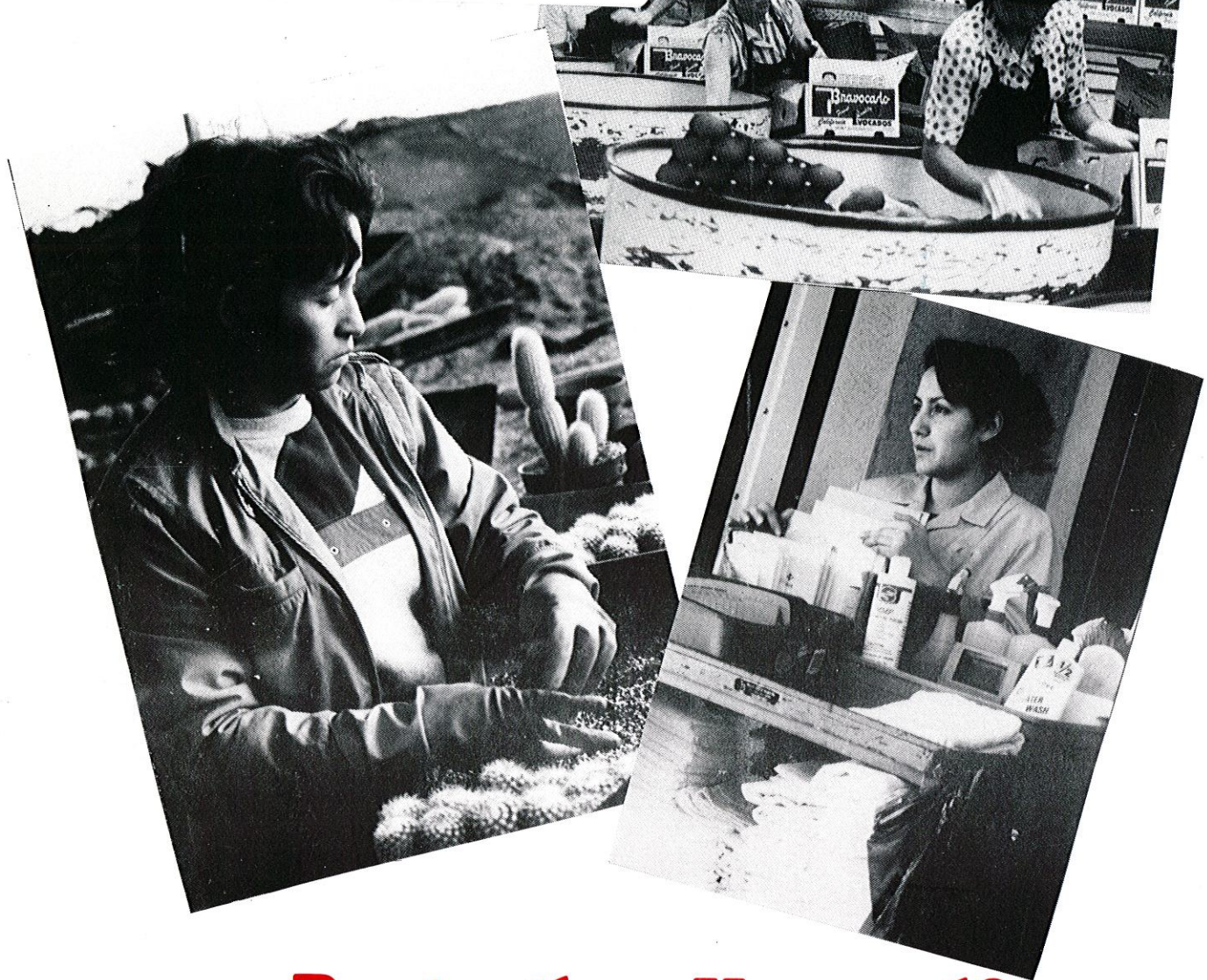


Resource ID# 3576

Protecting Yourself and Your Unborn Baby from  
Toxic Substances/Como se Puede Proteger Usted Y  
Su Nino Por Nacer de las Substancias Toxicas



# Protecting Yourself and Your Unborn Baby from Toxic Substances

Birth Defects Prevention Project  
North County Health Services • 348 Rancheros Drive • San Marcos, CA 92069  
(619) 471-2100

# **Protecting Yourself and Your Unborn Baby from Toxic Substances**

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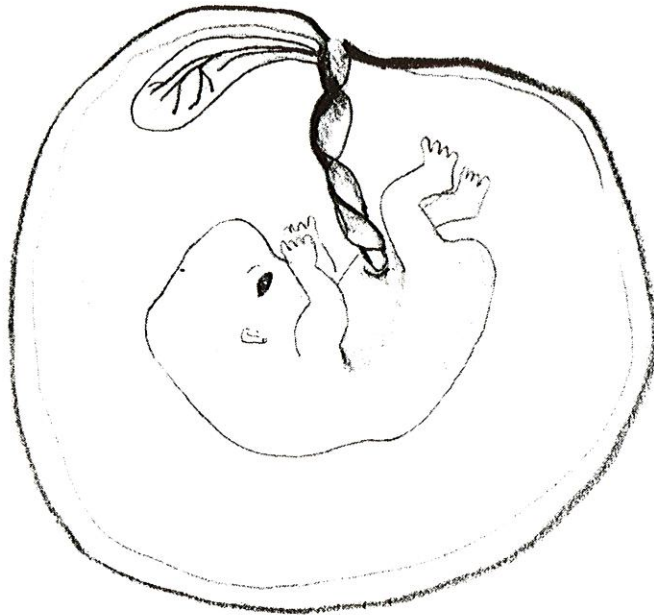
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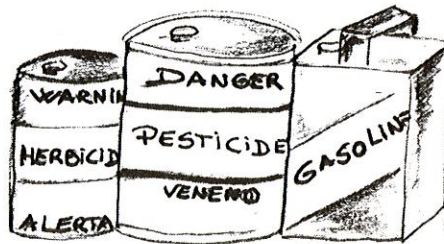
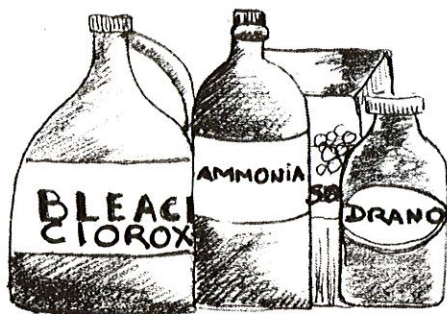
Your baby needs your love and protection even before birth.



During pregnancy your body naturally protects and nourishes your unborn baby. The placenta provides a protective barrier for the fetus and the umbilical cord nourishes the fetus.

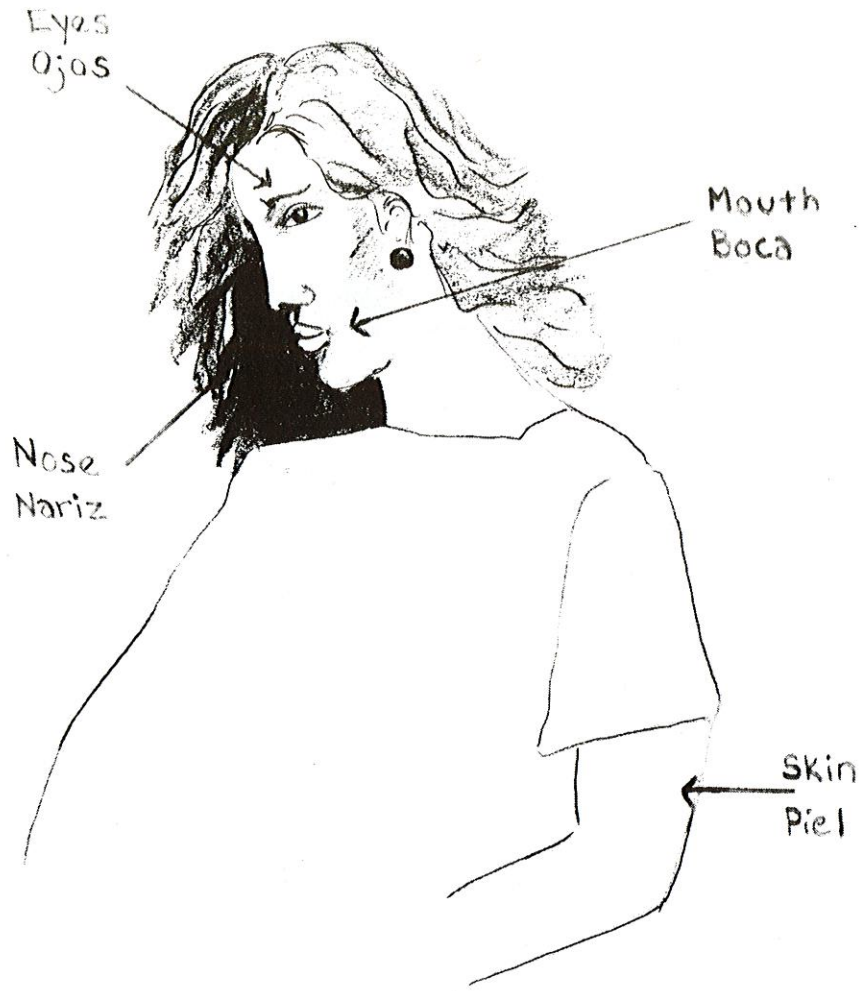


If toxic substances get into your body during pregnancy, they may cross your body's protective barriers and hurt your baby!

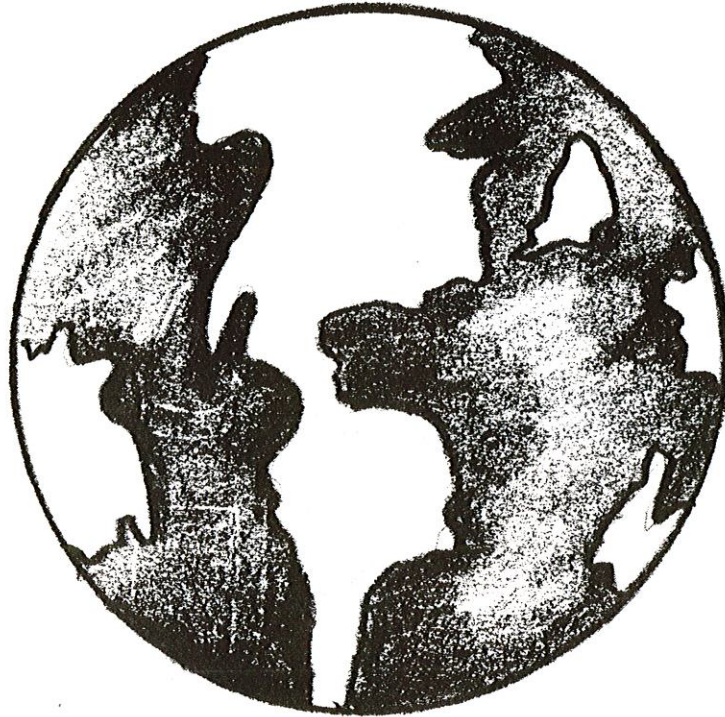


A toxic substance is a poison. Many chemicals that we use every day at home and work are toxic. For example:

- PESTICIDES
- HERBICIDES
- STRONG CLEANING CHEMICALS
- PAINT REMOVERS, SOLVENTS, AND GLUES



Chemicals enter your body through your skin, eyes, nose and mouth. They can then enter your bloodstream and injure nerves, lungs, and other organs. Remember, your unborn baby is exposed to the same things you are exposed to.



Your baby is affected by the outside world even before you know you are pregnant! Your work environment is one place you can be exposed to substances and conditions that can harm you and your unborn baby.





## **Housework**

In addition to cleaning your own home, you may work cleaning other people's homes, hotels, motels, restaurants, hospitals, or factories. You probably use strong cleaning products like ammonia, bleach, or other industrial strength cleaners. These products may be dangerous to you and your unborn baby.



## **Safety in Housework**

- Use safer ways to clean, like baking soda with water or milder soaps.
- If you must use cleaning chemicals:
  1. Read the label.
  2. Use gloves.
  3. Open windows and doors for air.
  4. Take breaks to breathe fresh air.
  6. **Do not mix any chemicals like bleach and ammonia.**



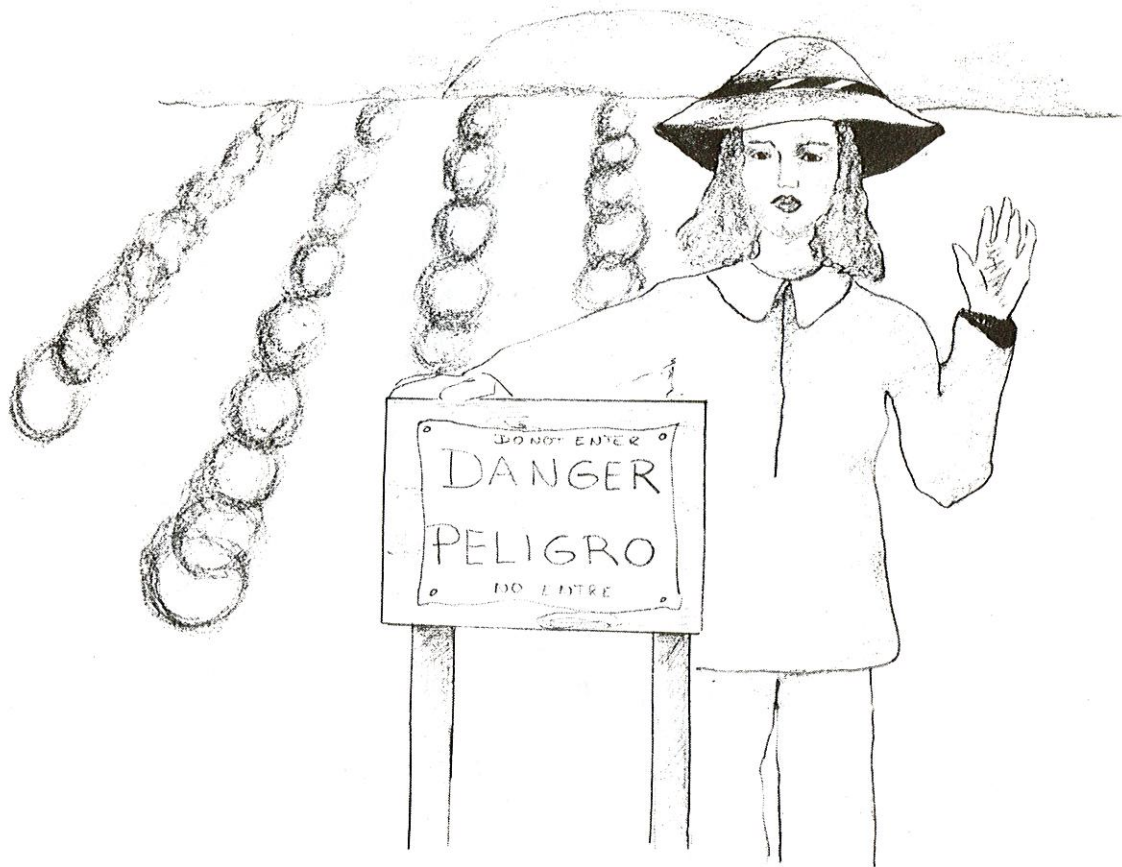
## **Agricultural Work**

Includes work in greenhouses, flower stands, and picking or sorting crops. In this work you are often exposed to pesticides and herbicides that can be dangerous to you and you unborn baby.



## **Safety in Agricultural Work**

1. Use the protective equipment given to you at work like a breathing mask, gloves, and goggles.
2. Use protective clothes like long sleeve shirts, pants, boots and hats.
3. Ask about the dangers of the chemicals you are being exposed to. **By law** you have the **right to know**.



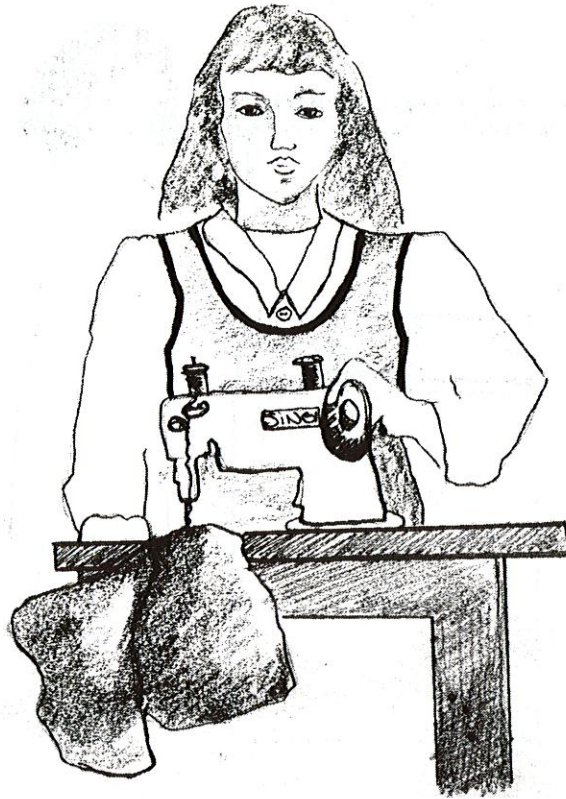
## **Safety in Agricultural Work**

4. Do not enter a workplace where pesticides have recently been applied.
5. Wash hands with soap and water before eating, drinking, smoking or using the bathroom. (Use water from the faucet or bottled water and not water from an irrigation canal.)
6. Store and dispose of chemicals safely. Do not use chemical containers for any other purpose.



## **Safety in Agricultural Work**

7. Store and wash work clothes separately (use a strong detergent and use gloves).
8. Shower and shampoo hair at the end of a workday.



## **Factory Work**

Includes assembly lines, fruit packing plants, and clothing manufacturers. This work often requires the use of chemicals. You often stand for long periods of time, are exposed to dust, fumes, loud noise, and work long hours.



## Safety in Factory Work

1. Avoid overworking yourself.
2. Ask about the danger of the chemicals you are being exposed to. **By law you have the right to know.**
3. Use the protective equipment given to you like a breathing mask, gloves, and goggles.





## **Safety in Factory Work**

4. Avoid heavy lifting and bending.
5. Take breaks when you can.
6. Drink plenty of fresh water and use the bathroom when needed.
7. Get plenty of rest and eat nutritious food.



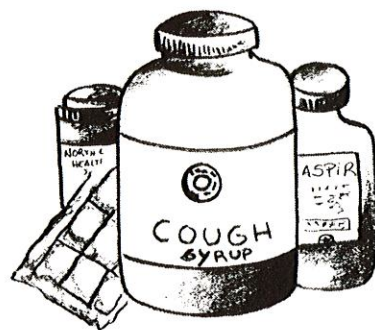
## **Your Environment**

It is very important to be aware of the things that we should avoid during pregnancy.



## **X-Rays**

Radiation can possibly damage your unborn baby.  
Tell the person taking the X-ray you are pregnant  
so you can be protected.



## Drugs

Many medicines can harm your baby. Always ask your doctor or pharmacist before taking any kind of medicine, including aspirin and other medicines you can buy without a prescription.



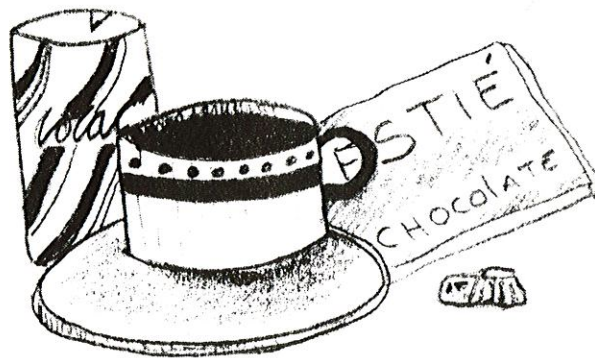
## **Alcohol**

Women who drink too much during pregnancy risk having children with malformed faces, growth failure, and mental retardation. Since doctors don't know how much is too much, it is best not to drink during pregnancy.



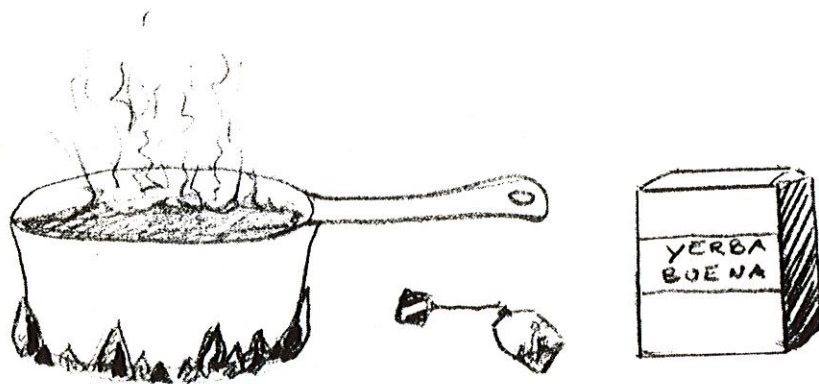
## **Smoking**

Mothers who smoke have more miscarriages and babies born too small or too soon. Smoking while you are pregnant endangers your health and your baby's health.



## **Caffeine**

Is in coffee, coca-cola, chocolate, teas, and many other soft drinks. It is a good idea to avoid large amounts of caffeine while you are pregnant. (Large amounts are more than two cups or cans a day.)



## **Herbs and Teas**

Some herbs that are used as medicines may be harmful to your unborn baby. Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or the Poison Control Center before using them.





## **Contaminated Water**

Never drink out of an irrigation canal or pipe, it may contain pesticides. Drink only fresh water from the tap or bottled water.



## **Diseases That Cause Birth Defects**

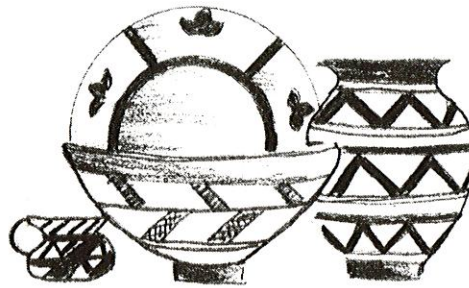
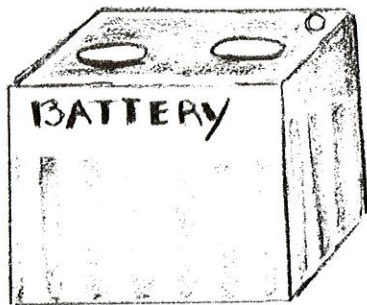
Here are only two examples:

- **RUBELLA** (measles) can cause birth defects if you get the disease while you are pregnant. The danger can be prevented by vaccination before or between pregnancies.
- **TOXOPLASMOSIS** is a disease you can get by eating undercooked meat or by handling cat droppings. The danger can be prevented by not eating undercooked meat and avoiding cat droppings.



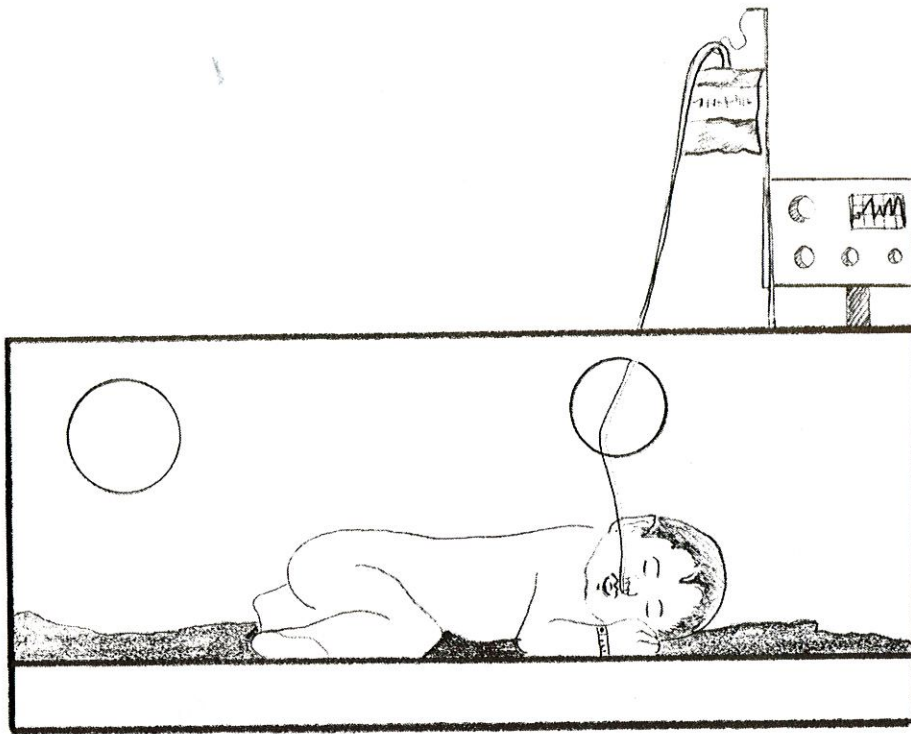
## **Sexually Transmitted Diseases**

Diseases like genital herpes or gonorrhea can cause health problems for your newborn unless preventive steps are taken. Be sure to tell your doctor if you or your partner have had any of these diseases.



## **Lead**

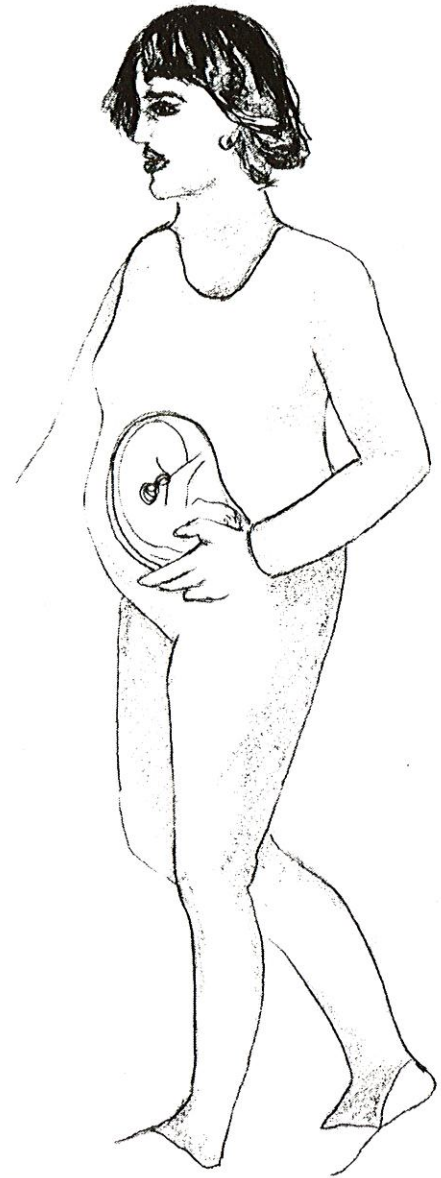
Exposure to lead has been found to increase the risk of miscarriage and stillbirths. Lead can be found at car battery recycling plants, in some manufacturing plants, and in some pottery glazes. Avoid exposure to lead if you are pregnant.



## **Why is it Important to Take Care of Your Health Before and During Pregnancy?**

If you do not, these are some things that can happen:

1. Birth defects.
2. Infertility.
3. Low birth weight which reduces the baby's ability to survive.
4. Health problems for your children such as neurological problems, heart problems, and mental retardation.
5. Complications during pregnancy like pre-term labor and uterine bleeding.



## **Stay Healthy During Your Pregnancy**

- Get early prenatal care and keep all your appointments
- Good nutrition is important. 25-30 lbs. is the ideal weight gain.
- Moderate exercise like walking is recommended.
- Get plenty of sleep and rest.
- Avoid stress.



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