

Staying Healthy Newsletter

Working together for healthier families

Prenatal care visits

Prenatal visits happen during your pregnancy. These visits are the best way to keep you and your unborn baby healthy. It is best if the first prenatal visit happens within your first trimester. As soon as you think you might be pregnant, make an appointment with your provider to get tested. To find a provider, you can use the **“Find a provider”** directory. There is no copayment or other charge for covered pregnancy-related services.

First prenatal visit

The first prenatal visit is very important. The provider will examine you and your growing baby to make sure everything is all right. The following will be done:

- A complete physical and emotional well-being check-up.
- Blood tests and a urine test.
- Screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV (the virus that causes AIDS).
- Treatment and counseling if the test results are positive.
- Tell the provider if you:
 - Take any medications, including any given to you by other providers.
 - Take any over the counter medicine, such as vitamins and supplements.
 - Participate in risky behaviors. Examples are drinking alcohol, doing illegal drugs, or smoking. This includes e-cigarettes and vaping. This will help them decide which resources to offer you.

It is important that you go to all of your prenatal care visits, even if you feel fine. Based on your health and other risk factors, the provider will tell you how often you should

be seen. If you meet certain criteria, then you may also get a special case manager or pregnancy care manager assigned to help you. Any time you have concerns about your pregnancy, call your provider.

Appointment Schedules

Your provider must see you within the following timelines once a prenatal appointment has been requested:

- First trimester- 1 to 12 weeks (months 1 to 3) – within 14 calendar days.
- Second trimester- 13 to 27 weeks (months 4 to 6)- within seven (7) calendar days.
- Third trimester- 28 to 40 weeks (months 7 to 9)- within three (3) business days.
- People with high-risk pregnancies should be seen as often as their health requires. You should be seen no later than (3) three business days after finding out you are high-risk.
- You should be seen immediately if it’s an emergency.

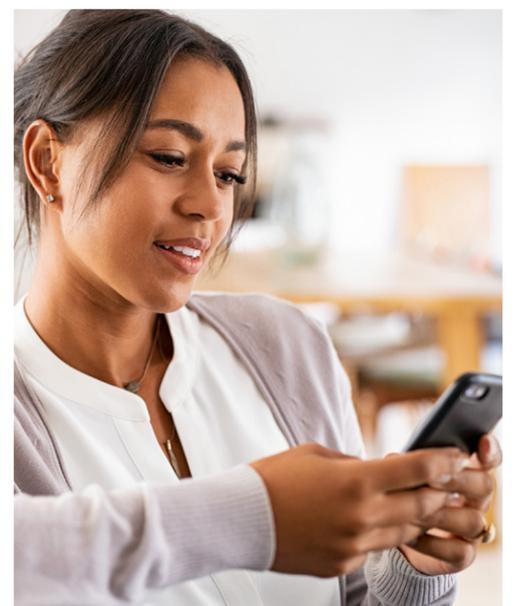
After your first visit, a common schedule is:

- Weeks 4-28: Visit at least every 4 weeks.
- Weeks 29-36: Visit at least every 2 weeks.
- Weeks 37-40: Visit at least every week.

Assistance with scheduling prenatal or postpartum appointments or transportation

Do you need help with finding or changing a maternity care provider? Do you need help scheduling a prenatal or postpartum appointment? Do you need a ride to an appointment?

You can call member services for help. Mercy Care Member Services is available Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **711**). Members with a SMI designation can call Member Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465** (TTY **711**).



Inside this issue: Page 2: Perinatal mood or anxiety disorders • Page 2: Family planning services and supplies • Page 3: Women’s wellness visits can keep you healthy • Page 3: Dental care and dental homes • Page 4: Keeping you and baby healthy • Page 5: Dangers of lead exposure • Page 6: Limiting interventions during labor and birth • Page 6: Staying healthy between pregnancies • Page 6: Provider and treatment options when pregnant • Page 7: Regular well visits are important • Page 7: Signs of active labor • Page 8: Managing asthma • Page 8: Community resources • Page 9: Tips for better sleep

Perinatal mood or anxiety disorders

There are many changes that can happen during and after having a baby. Some of those changes can make a person feel sad, anxious, overwhelmed, or confused. These thoughts and feelings may need treatment to get better. If you have these feelings and they last longer than two weeks or are severe and cause you to have problems doing normal daily activities, call your provider right away. They will figure out if your symptoms are caused by depression, anxiety, or something else.

Being depressed is more than “feeling down” or having the “blues.” It’s not because of something you did or didn’t do. It’s an illness and needs treatment to get better. If you need to talk to someone because you are having troubling thoughts, contact your provider or nurse right away. Do not wait to get help. You can also get help from a behavioral health provider. You don’t need a referral from the doctor to see them.

We’re here when you need help

Do you need help finding a behavioral health provider? Do you need help with scheduling your appointment or finding a ride to your appointment? You can call member services for help. Mercy Care Member Services is available Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **711**). Members with a SMI designation can call Member Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465** (TTY **711**). **24-hour nurse line for all members:** Use the phone prompt “speak to a nurse.”

For all emergencies, dial **911**.

Mental Health Support Hotlines

Arizona Behavioral Health Crisis Hot Line:

1-844-534-HOPE (4673)

Arizona Behavioral Health Crisis Text Line:

4HOPE (44673)

Maternal Mental Health Hotline:

1-833-TLC-MAMA (852-6262)

Postpartum Support International:

1-800-944-4773

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA):

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: **988**



Family planning services and supplies

We cover birth control for members of reproductive age, regardless of gender and at no cost. If you choose to delay or prevent pregnancy, talk with your provider about which options best fit you. You do not have to get your family planning services and supplies from your PCP. You can get family planning services and supplies from your primary care provider (PCP). You can also get them from any family planning service provider, including maternity care providers, as long as the provider works with AHCCCS. You do not need a referral or prior authorization.

The options below may prevent pregnancy. They also protect against some sexually transmitted infections (STIs). These are the options to choose from:

- Pregnancy testing
- Natural family planning education
- Contraception counseling
- Emergency contraception
- LARC (long-acting reversible contraceptives) and IPLARC (immediate postpartum long-acting reversible contraceptives) such as subdermal implantable contraceptive (implanted under the skin) and intrauterine devices (IUDs)
- Injectable and oral contraception
- Birth control pills, vaginal rings, diaphragms, and condoms
- Spermicidal foams, suppositories, jellies, and creams
- STI testing as well as counseling and treatment if the results are positive
- Medical and lab exams, and imaging such as x-rays and ultrasounds
- Treatment of complications due to contraception use (including emergency treatment)
- Medications for medical conditions related to family planning

We also cover some sterilization procedures for male and female members 21 years old and older. Examples are a tubal ligation and vasectomy. These procedures do not start working immediately. During the first three months, another form of birth control must be used to prevent pregnancy. At the end of three months, it is expected that a specific test will be done to confirm that the person is sterile. Members under 21 years old are only covered if they meet specific medical criteria. Documentation of informed consent is also needed.

Safer sex is dangerous

- Using birth control helps protect a person from getting pregnant.
- Using spermicidal foams, suppositories, jellies, or creams alone will not prevent pregnancy and some STIs.
- Condoms may prevent some STIs that people get from having sex.
- Some STIs have no symptoms.
- If you are having sex, get tested for STIs.

Talk with your provider during your 2nd or 3rd trimester, or if you just had a baby.

If you are pregnant or if you just had a baby, it is the perfect time for you to talk with your provider about contraception. It is important for the mother’s health to have enough time to recover between pregnancies. Talk with the health care provider about contraception methods including LARC (long-acting reversible contraceptives) and IPLARC (immediate postpartum long-acting reversible contraceptives). LARC and IPLARC are certain types of birth control. A couple examples are IUD’s or implants that are placed under the skin. These may have some risks, but those are very rare. A few risks are the IUD coming out of the uterus, an infection such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), and possible pregnancy. Even with these risks, the benefits of getting the birth control are greater. LARC and IPLARC are great options because they are convenient and they work well. They can also help avoid unintended pregnancy. Make sure you talk with your provider before leaving the hospital. Your provider can usually give it to you before you leave.

We’re here when you need help

Do you need help with scheduling a family planning visit or finding a ride to an appointment? You can call member services for help. Mercy Care Member Services is available Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **711**). Members with a SMI designation can call Member Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465** (TTY **711**). Member Services can also help you find a family planning provider if you do not have one.

Source: <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2016/09/clinical-challenges-of-long-acting-reversible-contraceptive-methods>

Source: AHCCCS AMPM 420 – Family Planning Services and Supplies Policy

Women's wellness visits can keep you healthy

Female members, or members assigned female at birth usually get their first reproductive health visit around 13 to 15 years old. These visits should happen every year after that. These visits are commonly called a women's wellness visit. The services included in this visit can be done by a primary care provider (PCP). An Obstetrician/Gynecologist (OB/GYN) can also do them. This is a provider that focuses on women's care and pregnancy. A PCP referral is not needed to see an OB/GYN. Members can go directly to an OB/GYN, as long as they work with Mercy Care.

Benefits of women's wellness visits

Getting regular check-ups and screenings every year is an important part of a woman's health. These visits include age-appropriate education, screenings, and tests. Screenings such as pap smear tests and mammograms are important tests that can help save your life. Pap smears commonly begin at 21 years old. This screening checks for cervical cancer. Mammograms commonly begin at 50 years old. This screening checks for breast cancer. Early diagnosis and treatment will generally result in a better outcome.

What to expect at the visit

- A physical exam (well exam) to check your overall health.
- A breast exam and a pelvic exam.
- Getting vaccines, screenings, and tests that are appropriate for age and risk factors.
- Screening and counseling on maintaining a healthy lifestyle. This can help to minimize health risks. The provider may discuss or provide testing on the following:
 - Good nutrition and age-appropriate weight gain.
 - Participating in at least one (1) hour of physical activity every day.
 - Having good oral health care and when to see a dentist.
 - Avoiding risky behaviors such as drinking alcohol and using street drugs. This also includes smoking, vaping, and e-cigarettes.
 - Screenings for depression.
 - Screenings for interpersonal and domestic violence.
 - Sexually transmitted infections (STI) testing.
 - Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) testing.
 - Family planning services and supplies.
 - Preconception counseling. This is a discussion on having a healthy lifestyle before getting pregnant and between pregnancies.
- Annual syphilis testing beginning at age 15 years old.
- Counseling and treatment when the STI and HIV tests have a positive result.
- Referrals to specialists if there is a need for evaluations, diagnosis, and/or treatments.

There is no copayment or other charges for covered women's preventive care services.

We're here when you need help

Do you need help with scheduling a women's wellness visit or finding a ride to an appointment? You can call member services for help. Mercy Care Member Services is available Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **711**). Members with a SMI designation can call Member Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465** (TTY **711**). Member Services can also help you schedule a ride to your appointment if you need one.



Source: AHCCCS AMPM Ch 411 – Women's Preventive Care Services Policy

Source: ACOG (May 2024) <https://www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2020/10/the-initial-reproductive-health-visit>

Dental care and dental homes

Poor dental health, cavities and gum disease can cause health problems such as:

- Illnesses including heart disease or diabetes.
- An infection in the blood, called sepsis.
- Tooth loss, which can affect a person's ability to eat and speak.

To prevent tooth decay:

- Brush teeth at least twice a day with toothpaste that has fluoride.
- Clean between the teeth daily with dental floss.
- Eat nutritious and balanced meals.
- Limit sugar and soda intake.
- Drink fluoridated water.
- Visit the dentist regularly for cleanings and an oral exam.

What is a dental home?

Mercy Care assigns all members under 21 years of age to a dental home. A dental home is where the member and a dentist work together to best meet any dental health needs. The dental home builds trust between the member and the dentist. It is a place to get regular and ongoing dental care, and not just a place to go when there is a dental problem. A dental home may be an office or facility where all dental services are provided in one place. Members are assigned a dental home when they enroll with Mercy Care. The assigned dental home can be changed by calling Member Services.

Dental care for members under 21 years of age

We cover two (2) routine preventive dental visits and two (2) cleanings/ fluoride treatments per year. Visits to the dentist must take place within six months and one day after the previous visit. Children should have their first dental visit when their first tooth is visible. This can be as early as 6 months old, and it usually happens before a child turns one year old. A referral for dental care is not needed. There is no copayment or other charges for routine dental care.

Primary care providers (PCPs) should do oral health screenings at every well visit. They should also be referring members to the dentist by the time they are 1 year old. Their PCP will also do a dental referral if there are any concerns. For members between 6 months old, with at least one tooth erupted, and up to 5 years of age, the PCP can also apply fluoride varnish treatment once every three months. This fluoride treatment is in addition to

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

the two (2) fluoride treatments they will get during their bi-annual dental visits.

Dental care for members 21 years of age or older

Members 21 years of age or older have a \$1,000 emergency dental benefit. Routine dental services are not covered for members 21 years of age or older. Covered dental services include examining the mouth, x-rays, care of fractures of the jaw or mouth, giving anesthesia and pain medication and/or antibiotics. There are exceptions to these limitations of service; certain pre-transplant services, prophylactic extraction of teeth in preparation for radiation treatment of cancer of the jaw, neck or head, and cleanings for members who are in an inpatient hospital setting and are placed on a ventilator are also covered.

**LTC and DDD members over 21 are also covered for routine dental services up to \$1000 per contract year.*

Dental care during pregnancy

It's important to have good oral health when pregnant. Women that are pregnant are at a higher risk of having oral health problems. Cavities or infections in the mouth can cause bad bacteria to travel through the blood and can pass on to the unborn baby. Dental infections can cause a baby to be born early and at a low birth weight. In Arizona, only 37.4% of individuals had a dental cleaning while pregnant. If you are pregnant, be sure to talk to your provider about any oral health concerns and your dental care needs. When at the dentist, let them know you are pregnant before getting any x-rays. They have a special apron to wear that will protect you and the baby.

We're here when you need help

Do you need help with finding or changing a dentist? Do you need help scheduling a dental appointment? Do you need a ride to the appointment? You can call Member Services for help. Mercy Care Member Services is available Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **711**). Members with a SMI designation can call Member Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465** (TTY **711**).

If you need to change or cancel a dental appointment, call the dental provider 24-48 hours in advance.

Source: ADHS Arizona State Health Assessment 2024



Keeping you and your baby healthy

Pregnancy and Risky Behaviors

Pregnant women should talk to their maternity care provider about the following:

- All of their physical and behavioral health conditions.
- Any medication use, including those prescribed by another provider and any over-the-counter vitamins and supplements.
- If they are currently in a medication assisted treatment program or a drug program.
- If they smoke (including e-cigarettes and vaping), drink alcohol or use illegal drugs.

Substance use during pregnancy

Pregnant women should avoid taking opioids. This is a medication that helps take pain away. They are sometimes given to people by a provider after an injury or surgery. Tell their provider if they are taking any medicine for pain, even if it was given by another provider. Pregnant women should also avoid smoking (including e-cigarettes and vaping), drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs. All of these can cause problems during pregnancy such as premature birth, birth defects and infant death.

They can also cause the baby to be born with neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS). NAS happens when pregnant women use certain substances during pregnancy, causing the baby to go through withdrawals after birth. Babies born with NAS are more likely to have a low birth weight, breathing and feeding problems, and seizures. Talk to their provider before attempting to quit. They can also seek help from a local treatment center. If they do not feel comfortable talking to the provider about their problem, you can call Mercy Care DCS CHP Member Services for help.

Nutrition and Healthy Eating While Pregnant

Eating healthy during pregnancy is important. It's also important to maintain a healthy weight while pregnant. Being overweight or underweight during pregnancy can cause health problems for you and the baby. Here are some healthy tips they can follow:

- Do something physically active every day.
- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of water each day.
- Eat healthy snacks and meals.
- Avoid foods with no or low nutritional value such as fried, fatty, and sugary foods.
- Avoid foods that cause people to feel sick such as raw fish, raw or undercooked meat and eggs, soft cheeses, unpasteurized milk and juices, and raw sprouts.

Prenatal vitamins

When the baby gets the right vitamins and minerals, they are more likely to be born healthy. The body needs extra help from those vitamins and minerals while pregnant. Some examples are folic acid, iron, calcium, vitamin D, choline, B vitamins, and vitamin C. These can be found in prenatal multivitamins. One of the important vitamins the baby needs is folic acid (a B vitamin). At least 400 micrograms of folic acid should be taken every day before and during pregnancy to help prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)/ Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID)

SIDS/SUID is the sudden and unexplained death of an infant. Babies that sleep on their backs have less chance of dying from SIDS/SUID. The baby can also be placed on a firm surface to sleep. Other ways to prevent this is to *not* use fluffy blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, waterbeds, sheepskins, or other soft bedding in the crib.

Safe sleep for babies

Safe sleeping practices can help reduce the risk of the baby dying from SIDS/SUID and other sleep related causes of infant death. These are some safety tips on newborn safe sleeping habits:

- Always place the baby on their back for safe sleeping.

continued on page 5

Dangers of lead exposure

Lead in a person's blood can cause serious health problems. Lead poisoning is caused by breathing in or swallowing lead. Lead can be found in:

- Paint and dust in older homes, especially dust from home repairs
- Candy, makeup, toys, jewelry, pottery, utensils, and traditional medicines made in Mexico, Asia, India, and Africa
- Work like auto repair, construction, and plumbing
- Soil, dirt, dust, and tap water from lead pipes
- Spices, herbal remedies, and ceremonial powders

Lead poisoning symptoms

The earliest symptoms are tiredness, headaches, moodiness, constipation, trouble sleeping, and stomach problems. It's hard to tell if a child has been exposed to lead because they cannot tell you what they are feeling, or there are no symptoms present. The best way to check for lead poisoning is to get a blood lead test. Check with their provider about available testing.

Blood lead testing

At Mercy Care, **we require that children be tested when they turn 12 months old and 24 months old.** If they miss one of those tests then they need to get tested before they turn six (6) years old. We offer blood lead testing and treatment at no cost.

Lead exposure during pregnancy

If you are pregnant, it's especially important to avoid exposure to lead. Lead can pass from a mother to her unborn baby. Too much lead in the body can:

- Put you at risk of miscarriage
- Cause a baby to be born too early or too small
- Hurt a baby's brain, kidneys, and nervous system
- Cause a child to have learning or behavior problems

Lead exposure in children

Children can be exposed to lead where they live, learn, and play. Even if exposed at low levels, it can cause:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Slowed growth and development
- Reading, learning and behavior problems
- Hearing and speech problems
- In severe cases, coma, seizures and even death can occur

Ways to help prevent lead poisoning

- Ask the provider to check if you live in a high-risk zip code.
- Check for lead in the paint on the home and in items found in the home.
- Keep the areas where children play clean and dust free.
- Wash hands often, especially after playing outside and before eating.
- Mop hard floors and use wet-wipes on surfaces, instead of sweeping or dry dusting.
- When vacuuming carpets and rugs, use a HEPA filter.
- Avoid candy, spices, makeup, toys, jewelry, pottery, utensils, and traditional medicines imported from Mexico and other countries.
- Eat foods rich in calcium, iron, and vitamin C such as milk, cheese, yogurt, eggs, dried beans, red meats, citrus fruit, green peppers, and tomatoes.

Lead poisoning can be prevented. The key is to keep people from coming in contact with it. If someone is poisoned by lead, they must be treated. More information about lead poisoning can be found on the CDC website - *Preventing Childhood Lead Poisoning* or the ADHS website - *Lead Poisoning*.



Source - CDC: [cdc.gov/lead-prevention/about/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/lead-prevention/about/index.html)

Source - ADHS: <https://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/epidemiology-disease-control/lead-poisoning/index.php>

- Use a safety-approved crib, covered by a fitted sheet.
- No pillows, blankets, sheepskins, or crib bumpers.
- No soft objects, toys, or loose bedding near the baby's sleeping area.
- No smoking around the baby.
- Babies should not sleep in an adult bed, on a couch, or on a chair alone or with someone.
- Nothing should cover or be near the baby's head.

Breastfeeding

Breast milk is the best source of food that a baby can get during their first six months to 1 year of life. Breast milk can help support the baby's immune system. A breast pump is great to use so milk will be ready for the baby when breastfeeding isn't possible. Ask the provider for information on how to receive a breast pump. Mercy Care Member Services or their perinatal care manager can also help. Breast pumps are available at no cost. Questions? Call the ADHS 24-Hour Breastfeeding Hotline at **1-800-833-4642**, available 24 hours a day.

Testing for Infections

Your provider will check for sexually transmitted infections (STI) such as chlamydia, HIV, and syphilis at your first prenatal visit. They will also offer voluntary HIV testing. If the test is positive for HIV or any STI, the provider can help with treatment and counseling services at no cost. Early treatment can help prevent passing these infections to the baby. The sooner these are diagnosed and treated, the better the medicine will work. For babies born with HIV, giving them medicines early can help them live longer, healthier lives.

Syphilis and pregnancy

Syphilis in pregnant women can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, and infant death. Syphilis can cause major health problems for babies. It can cause damage to their skin, bones, joints, eyes, ears, and brain. Testing for syphilis is important because in the early stages the symptoms can be mild, so people may not know that they have the infection. The best way to protect the baby from syphilis is by getting a simple blood test and antibiotics to cure the disease. Your provider will test for syphilis at the first prenatal visit, early in the third trimester, and at delivery.

We're here when you need help

Do they need help finding a maternity care provider? Do they need help with scheduling their appointment or finding a ride to their appointment? You can call member services for help. Mercy Care Member Services is available Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **711**). Members with a SMI designation can call Member Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465** (TTY **711**).

Source - ADHS: [azdhs.gov/prevention/womens-childrens-health/index.php](https://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/womens-childrens-health/index.php)

Source - ACOG: [acog.org/womens-health/resources-for-you](https://www.acog.org/womens-health/resources-for-you)

Limiting interventions during labor and birth

Avoid scheduling a C-section or induction before pregnancy week 39

Scheduling a Cesarean delivery (also known as a C-section) or an induction before 39 weeks without a medical need can be dangerous for you and the baby. A C-section birth is the delivery of the baby through surgical cuts in the belly and uterus. Induction is a procedure to start labor before it begins naturally.

Waiting 39 weeks gives babies the time they need to grow before being born. Major organs, like the brain, lungs and liver are still growing. Their eyes and ears are still developing, and they are learning to suck and swallow. If a baby is born too early, they might miss an important stage of development. For the baby, there are some risks with inductions such as breathing problems, trouble eating, learning and behavior problems, and jaundice. For you, some risks with having a C-section are infection and tearing in the uterus causing severe bleeding. Your provider will talk to you if there is a medical need for you to have your baby early.

Create a birth plan

Another way to prepare is to create a birth plan. A birth plan is how you share what you want and/or prefer during labor and delivery. A birth plan makes it easier for the provider to support you. Try to be flexible because things may change, and you may not get everything that is listed in your birth plan during labor. Also, be sure to note what is covered by Mercy Care and what isn't.

A birth plan can include details about:

- The birthing room
- Labor and birth
- Self-care activities and coping techniques
- Pain relief during labor
- What happens right after birth
- Postpartum care (care for you and baby after birth)

Low-impact labor techniques

- It is recommended if a pregnant member is low risk, then they may benefit from:
- One-on-one emotional care such as a doula (someone trained to help during labor)
- Relaxation techniques such as massage and spending time in water in early labor
- Moving freely throughout labor
- Pushing in a comfortable position

Go to childbirth classes

Another way to help prepare you for the labor and delivery process is going to birthing classes. You can sign up for birthing classes around week 28 of your pregnancy. Just call the hospital where you will have your baby to find out when classes are, and to sign up. Classes are available at no cost. Mercy Care can help schedule a ride to your classes if you cannot find one.

Source – ACOG 2025 Article: “Approaches to Limit Intervention During Labor and Birth”

Staying healthy between pregnancies

It is important to stay healthy between pregnancies. If you have recently had a baby, you may want to think about birth spacing. This is the time between pregnancies. After having a baby, it is good to wait at least 18 months before the next pregnancy. Waiting 18 months can reduce the risk of having the baby too early or the baby being born with a low birth weight. Babies who have a low birth weight or are born too early may be born with other health problems. Some examples are asthma, developmental delay, or hearing and vision loss. Talk to your provider about your family planning options.

Ways to get healthy before getting pregnant

1. Develop a plan on when to have a baby
2. Visit the doctor regularly for a checkup
3. Be sure all vaccines are up to date
4. Learn about any health problems that run in the family
5. Be sure all health conditions such as asthma and diabetes are managed
6. Use birth control until ready to get pregnant
7. Use protection to avoid sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
8. Take a multivitamin that contains 400 micrograms of folic acid every day
9. Get help to stop drinking alcohol and using drugs
10. Get help to stop smoking (including e-cigarettes and vaping)
11. Adopt a healthy lifestyle, eat healthy, and get to a healthy weight
12. Do something physically active every day
13. Avoid harmful chemicals, metals and other toxic substances at work and at home
14. Learn ways to lower stress levels and get mentally healthy
15. Provide a safe environment, away from abuse and violence



Source CDC 2025 Pregnancy Planner: cdc.gov/pregnancy/media/pdfs/Pregnancy_Planner_508.pdf

Provider and treatment options when pregnant

Mercy Care allows our members the freedom of choice when choosing a provider. If you are receiving prenatal care from an AHCCCS Obstetrician/Gynecologist (OB/GYN), and you transition to Mercy Care from another health plan or you become enrolled during your third trimester, then you have the opportunity of staying with that OB/GYN. That provider does not have to be in the Mercy Care network. If you want to stay with that OB/GYN, call Member Services as soon as possible to avoid being assigned to a different OB/GYN. Members also have the opportunity to change health plans. This is to ensure there is no interruption to prenatal care. If you decide to choose this option, please call Member Services right away.

Members do not need a referral from their primary care provider (PCP). For members that are not new to the plan, they can go directly to an OB/GYN. The OB/GYN has to be in the Mercy Care network. The OB/GYN will oversee all pregnancy care. The PCP will oversee all routine health care. Members can also choose to have their OB/GYN as their PCP during their pregnancy. If you decide to choose this option, please call Member Services right away.



Regular well visits are important

It's important for everyone, not just children or babies, to have regular well visits with their primary care provider (PCP). These well visits allow the PCP to address any physical and behavioral needs. Well visits help keep people healthy.

What is the EPSDT program?

Members under 21 years of age are covered under the Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) Program. This is a complete health program. The program covers services that are medically necessary and cost-effective, and they are also at no cost to you. The program does not cover experimental or cosmetic services.

What is covered under the EPSDT Program?

- Services done by physicians, nurse practitioners, naturopaths, and specialists.
- Hospital visits, well visits, sick visits, and visits with specialists.
- Therapies, vaccines, medications, labs, and x-rays.
- Medical, dental, and behavioral health services.
- Medical equipment, appliances, and supplies, including orthotics and prosthetics.
- Eyeglasses and frames. This includes repairing and replacing frames.
- Help with scheduling appointments and medically necessary transportation.
- Family planning services and supplies.
- Women's preventive services and maternity services.

When should a well visit occur?

Visits with a PCP should happen when a person is sick **AND** when they are healthy.

Important well visit dates:

- Newborn and 3-5 days old
- Under 1 year old (During months: 1, 2, 4, 6, and 9)
- Between 1 and 3 years of age (During months: 12, 15, 18, 24, and 30)
- Between 3 and 20 years of age (Every year)

What happens during an EPSDT well visit?

- Physical exam (gowns can be used to cover the body).
- Talk about any personal or family history of health problems.
- Do screenings on growth and development, autism, depression, and more.
- Check hearing, vision, and oral health (teeth and gums).
- Check height, weight, and age-appropriate weight gain.
- Ask about eating habits, nutrition and healthy eating.
- Get vaccines and make sure they are up to date.
- Order labs (blood tests), imaging, or other testing if needed. Some examples of age-specific labs are anemia, sickle cell, heart health, lead, TB, and syphilis.
- Get education on how to manage a chronic condition such as asthma or heart disease.
- Get education on age-appropriate topics such as safety and lead exposure.
- Get information on available community resources such as AzEIP, CRS, Head Start/Early Head Start, Home Visitation programs, Encircle Families, and the Birth to Five Hotline.

For anyone between 10 and 20 years old, their visit will **also** include:

- Screening for depression, suicide, and other mood disorders.
- Screening for substance use, such as drinking alcohol, using drugs, or smoking.
- Talking about reproductive health, birth control, and safe sex.
- Screening for pregnancy. This may include counseling, treatment, and a referral.
- Screening, treatment, and counseling for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Talking about avoiding risky behaviors. Subjects such as using caution on social media and not engaging bullying or violence.

If the provider has concerns or if any screenings have a positive result, then a referral will be made for you to see a specialist.

We're here when you need help

Do you need help with scheduling a well visit or finding a ride to an appointment? You can call member services for help. Mercy Care Member Services is available Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. at **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **711**). Members with a SMI designation can call Member Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465** (TTY **711**).

Signs of active labor

If you think you are in labor or think you may have a problem with your pregnancy, call your provider immediately. If it is an emergency, your provider should see you right away or within three (3) business days of your call. Call your provider immediately if you have any of these symptoms. Don't wait for them to go away.

Important symptoms you should pay attention to:

- Discharge, blood or water leaking from the vagina
- Low, dull backache
- Feel like you're going to start your period (period-like cramping)
- Pelvic pressure (like the baby is pushing down)
- Stomach cramps (you may or may not have diarrhea with this)
- Regular contractions that last for over an hour

If you are in labor and need a ride to the hospital, call **911**.

Call the provider or go to the hospital?

You should go to the hospital if you have any of these warning signs:

- Your water broke but there are no contractions
- You are bleeding heavily from the vagina
- You have constant, severe pain with no relief in between contractions
- You feel less movement from the fetus



Source: <https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/how-to-tell-when-labor-begins>

Managing asthma

About 28 million Americans have asthma, and over 4.6 million of them are under 18 years of age.

Asthma is a chronic lung condition that affects people of all ages. It causes wheezing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. It can also cause coughing at night, early in the morning, or during exercise. If unmanaged, these symptoms can lead to asthma attacks and ER visits.

People with asthma also may need to be careful when doing physical activities. Sometimes exercise can trigger an asthma attack. Illnesses such as colds, flu, bronchitis, and pneumonia can make asthma symptoms worse. They may require urgent care or emergency treatment.

If you or your child regularly have breathing discomfort, do a checkup with a primary care provider (PCP). They can perform breathing tests to see if asthma is present. If asthma is present, they can provide treatments to help. Some examples are short-term medications like inhalers and long-term treatments such as pills, shots, or inhalers.

The best way to manage asthma is to have medication on hand and to avoid triggers. Some asthma triggers can be smoke, mold, pests and insects, pet hair and dander, dust mites and air pollution.

To help prevent symptoms from getting worse, you can check your home for issues that may trigger symptoms and remove them. You can also check weather apps for poor outdoor air quality alerts. Stay inside or wear a mask on those days.



Source: [cdc.gov/asthma/](https://www.cdc.gov/asthma/)

Community resources

2-1-1 Arizona

Community Information and Referral Services transforms lives by linking individuals and families to vital community services throughout Arizona. Dial **2-1-1** or <https://211arizona.org/>

Affirm (formerly Arizona Family Health Partnership)

This federally funded program offers family planning, women's health services and education to Arizonans, regardless of their ability to pay. Call or go online to find a qualified health center near you. Call **602-258-5777** or <https://www.affirmaz.org/>

Arizona Early Intervention Program (AZEIP)

AZEIP helps families of children with disabilities or developmental delays age birth to three years old. They provide support and can work with their natural ability to learn. To get help call Mercy Care Member Services, AzEIP Information Line: **1-800-592-0140** or www.azdes.gov/azeip

Arizona Head Start

Early Head Start/Head Start is a great program that gets preschoolers ready for kindergarten. They offer services at no cost to you. Call **602-262-4040** or visit www.azheadstart.org.

ADHS Health Start

Uses community health workers to provide education, support and advocacy services to pregnant and postpartum women and their families.

602-542-1025

<https://strongfamiliesaz.com/program/arizona-health-start/>

ADHS 24-Hour Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Hotline

A 24-hour, 7 days a week hotline answered by an International Board-Certified Lactation Consultants. Call **1-800-833-4642** or <https://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/nutrition-physical-activity/breastfeeding/index.php>

Arizona and Drug Information Center

No-cost, confidential, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

1-800-222-1222 or visit

<http://www.azpoison.com/>

Arizona Opioid Assistance & Referral (OAR) Line

A no-cost, confidential hotline offers opioid advice, resources and referrals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This Hotline is staffed with local medical experts at the Arizona and Banner Poison & Drug Information Centers who offer patients, family members or providers valuable opioid information. Call **1-888-688-4222** or visit <https://www.azdhs.gov/oarline>.

Arizona Chapter - Postpartum Support International Warm Line

Offer's support for families dealing with postpartum depression, postpartum anxiety and other mood disorders associated with pregnancy and postpartum. This is a volunteer,

peer support warm line. They help families dealing with postpartum. Call or text 24 hours a day/7 days a week: **1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262)** or www.psiarizona.org

Arizona Diaper Bank

The Arizona Diaper Bank provides Children's Diapers, Adult Incontinence Briefs, and Menstruation (period) products to those in need. They are committed to ensuring that every child, adolescent, and adult has access to clean, dry products to help improve their health, dignity, and well-being. Call in Tucson: **520-325-1400**, Call in Phoenix: **602-715-2629**, or <https://diaperbank.org/need-assistance/>

ARIZONA@WORK

ARIZONA@WORK provides comprehensive statewide and locally-based workforce solutions for job seekers and employers. <https://arizonaatwork.com>

Arizona Smokers Helpline ASHLine

This program is available to help people quit smoking and to get coaching to help them through the process. It also gives information on how to protect people from secondhand smoke. There are several no cost resources available, including Quit Coaching. Call **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)** or **1-855-DEJELO-YA (1-855-335-3569)** or visit <https://www.azdhs.gov/ashline/>

Birth to 5 Helpline

Free service available to all Arizona families with young children, as well as parents-to-be, with questions or concerns about their infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Call Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. **877-705-KIDS** <https://www.swhd.org/programs/health-and-development/birth-to-five-helpline/>

Child Care Resource and Referral

Statewide program that helps families find childcare. Call **1-800-308-9000** or <https://www.azccrr.com>.

Count the Kicks App

A no-cost pregnancy app available to individuals who are in their third trimester of pregnancy. The app helps expectant parents learn about the importance of tracking fetal movements. Tracking these movements, in addition to regular prenatal visits, helps monitor the baby's well-being. You can download the app at <https://www.countthekicks.org>.

CPLC Parenting Arizona

Offers positive parenting education to all Arizona families by empowering parents with the skills to raise healthy and successful children. More information, call **602-248-0428** or <https://www.cplc.org>.

Dump the Drugs

Find drop box locations to dispose unused or unwanted prescription drugs. This application displays all drop off locations in Arizona and enables the user to enter their address to

continued on page 9

continued from page 8

receive directions to the location closest to them.

General and Public information: **602-542-1025** or <https://azdhs.gov/gis/dump-the-drugs-az>

Family Spirit

For Native American families with children under 3 years old. This is a culturally tailored home visitation program to support young Native parents from pregnancy to 3 years postpartum. Parents gain knowledge and skills to achieve optimum development for their preschool age children.

<https://strongfamiliesaz.com/program/family-spirit-home-visiting-program>

First Things First

Partners with families and communities to help our state's young children be ready for success in kindergarten and beyond.

602-771-5100 or **877-803-7234** or <https://www.firstthingsfirst.org/>

Fussy Baby Program

Fussy Baby program is a component of the Birth to Five Helpline and gives support for parents who are concerned about their baby's temperament or behavior during the first year of life.

877-705-KIDS or <https://www.swhd.org/programs/health-and-development/fussy-baby>

Healthy Families Arizona

A no-cost home visitation program where a community health worker will go to the pregnant member's home to help with any concerns and to give information. The program starts while the member is pregnant and can continue through the time that the baby is 2 years old!

<https://strongfamiliesaz.com/program/healthy-families-arizona>

Hushabye Nursery

Provides short-term medical care to infants with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). Offers non-judgmental support, education and counseling to families and caregivers.

Call **480-628-7500** or online at www.hushabyenursery.org

Jacob's Hope

Jacob's Hope is a clinic for newborns who are suffering with withdrawals from prenatal exposure to drugs. Their medically nurturing facility cares for these infants in a home-like environment until they are ready for discharge.

480-398-7373 or <https://jacobshopeaz.org/>

La Leche League of Arizona

La Leche League gives free support for women who choose to breastfeed through the Valley Help Line and support groups. Call

602-234-1956 or **1-800-525-3243**, or www.llofaz.org

Lead Safe Phoenix Program

This is a no-cost home visitation program that provides community outreach and education to people who live in the city of Phoenix. Home visitors will provide blood lead testing to children under 6 years old, they will check your home for lead, educate you on lead poisoning and refer

you to community resources if needed.

602-525-3162 or <https://www.phoenix.gov/administration/departments/nsd/housing-repairs/lead-safe-phx.html>

Nurse-Family Partnership

A no-cost home visitation program that offers help for first-time mothers who are less than 28-weeks pregnant in Maricopa or Pima County. A specially trained nurse will visit you in your home to help you have a healthier pregnancy and can continue to visit until your baby is 2 years old. Call **602-224-1740** or <https://strongfamiliesaz.com/program/arizona-health-start/>

Parents Partners Plus

A no-cost home visitation program that offers individualized support around every day parenting experiences and family well-being. They help with breastfeeding, fighting postpartum depression, child-rearing or otherwise transitioning into life as a parent, and more. Call **602-633-0732** or

<https://parentpartnersplus.com/>

Power Me A2Z

Provides free vitamins from the Arizona Department of Health Services, which is important for women's health. There are no hidden costs.

<https://www.azdhs.gov/powermea2z/>

Encircle Families

Encircle Families exists to improve the lives of children with the full range of disabilities, from birth to age 26, by providing support, training, information, and individual assistance so families can become effective advocates for their children.

<https://encirclefamilies.org/>

Phoenix - **602-242-4366** or **1-800-237-3007**

Southern Arizona - Tucson **520-441-4007**

Southern Arizona - Yuma **928-444-8803**

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)

This food assistance program provides eligible households with monthly benefits they can use to purchase nutritious foods. They help families meet their fundamental needs by helping to fight food insecurities and allow people to overcome barriers and allowing for self-sufficiency. This program is also known as Food Stamps. Call **1-855-432-7587** or <https://des.az.gov/services/basic-needs/food-assistance>

Strong Families AZ

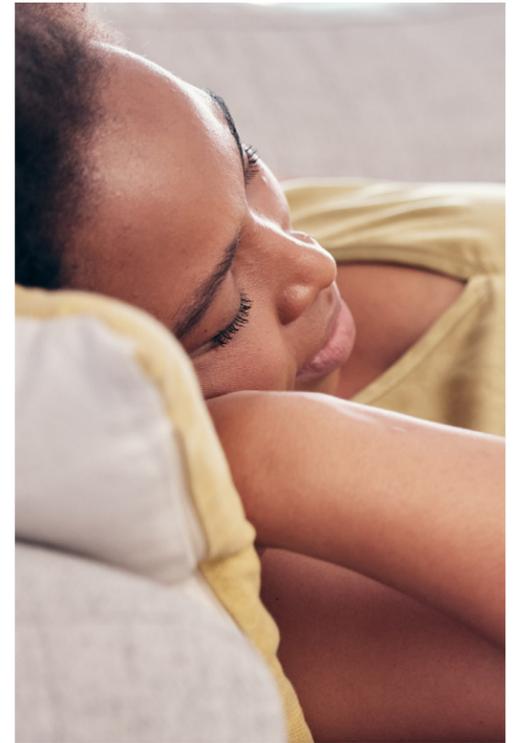
A network of no-cost home visitation programs that helps families raise healthy children ready to succeed in school and life. The programs focus on pregnant woman and families with children birth to age 5. Visit <https://strongfamiliesaz.com/> or call **602-345-0471** to find programs in your area.

WIC

WIC (Women, Infants, & Children) offers healthy foods for moms and their babies. WIC helps families meet their fundamental needs by helping to fight food insecurities and allow people to overcome barriers and allowing for self-sufficiency. They can also help with breastfeeding. Call **1-800-252-5942** to apply or visit www.azdhs.gov/azwic.

Tips for better sleep

- Reduce noise
- Exercise
- Keep your room dark
- Keep a consistent schedule
- Limit your caffeine intake



mercy care

Mercy Care

4750 S. 44th Place, Suite 150
Phoenix, AZ 85040

Contract services are funded under contract with AHCCCS. This is general health information and should not replace the advice or care you get from your provider. Always ask your provider about your own health care needs.

Mercy Care is administered by Aetna Medicaid Administrators, LLC, an Aetna company.

@MercyCareAZ



Call Mercy Care Member Services. For ACC, DDD and LTC members, call **602-263-3000** or **1-800-624-3879** (TTY **711**) Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Members with a SMI designation can call Member Services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **602-586-1841** or **1-800-564-5465** (TTY 711).

www.mercycareaz.org