

Teen Mothers Tip Sheet for Youth in Washington State Foster Care

Childproof your home.

Childproofing the home where your child will live helps reduce risks of choking, poisoning, burns, falls and furniture tip-overs. For simple safety tips, go to: www.safekids.org.

Be prepared for the baby.

A new baby is life-changing and you can never be fully prepared. A few things you can do before the baby comes include:

- Pack a bag for the hospital in case your baby comes early.
- Wash all your baby's clothes, bedding and blankets.
- Purchase or obtain a car seat and make sure you know how to correctly install it (many local fire departments will help install the car seat free of charge).
- Set up interviews with pediatricians and be sure to discuss immunizations, breastfeeding and any other questions you have about your baby's care.

Know your medical background.

Do some research and talk with your caseworker and family members about medical history of your mom and dad and other relatives. Doctors look most closely at the medical history of siblings, parents and children. Your medical history, including miscarriages, abortions and births, is also important in terms of knowing how well you may cope with your current pregnancy.

Breastfeeding and its benefits.

- Breastfeeding is best for your baby to provide the nutrition and immunities for healthy development. The Washington State Department of Health has information about breastfeeding: www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/WIC/BreastfeedingSupport.aspx
- Within Reach has information about breastfeeding and nutrition for your baby: www.withinreachwa.org/what-we-do/healthy-communities/breastfeeding



Other Tips

- Eat five or six small meals a day, eat fruit or vegetables with each meal and drink milk.
 - Take a prenatal vitamin and iron. Ask your OB-GYN or midwife which vitamins are best for you.
 - Drink plenty of fluids – at least eight to 10 glasses of caffeine-free drinks a day.
 - Don't smoke or let anyone else smoke around you or your baby.
 - Don't drink alcohol or use any street drugs, or prescriptions that have not been prescribed to you by your doctor. Consult with your OB-GYN or midwife before taking any prescribed medications, over-the-counter medications or herbal remedies.
 - Exercise at least 15 minutes a day but don't get overheated.
 - Get plenty of sleep – at least eight hours per night.
 - Wear comfortable shoes and put your feet up throughout the day to keep your feet and legs from swelling.
- Wear a seatbelt. Wear the shoulder strap across your collar bone and the lap belt under your belly, across your hips.
 - Play and talk to your baby! That is how they learn. You are their favorite toy.
 - Ask for HELP. Babies do not come with instructions.
 - Take care of yourself so you can take care of your baby.
 - Keep doctor appointments for yourself and your baby.
 - Read about Safe Sleeping Environments (bedding, animals, crib, smoking, co-sleeping).
 - Understand the purpose of a parenting plan. Babies NEED both parents, unless seeing or being with a parent is not safe. Find a way to keep track of all the appointments for you and your baby. (You may wish to use the planner/calendar on your cell phone).

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