Dear Alice,

My husband and I are both students at Columbia and are planning to have a child sometime next Spring. I was wondering how the health services pre- and postnatal department works. Will it be difficult for me to make appointments for checkups? Will I be able to meet with an OB/GYN at scheduled intervals?

Do the doctors at Medical Services see pregnant women? I could be wrong, but from the students I've spoken to and from the letters I've read on Go Ask Alice!, pregnancy is something most students don't want. I'd feel more comfortable knowing that the medical staff is familiar with pregnant women and infants.

If it's a problem, I'm considering getting healthcare insurance outside of the university, but I have to sign up BEFORE I get pregnant. I'd appreciate any information you could give me. I understand students who are young families are a minority here, but I wonder if there's a support group on campus that we might want to join.

Answer

Dear Reader,

It's great that you're thinking ahead about pregnancy and preparing yourself and your partner both financially and emotionally. You and your partner also seem to be clear on what you want, which is great. The Columbia Student Health Insurance Plan does cover prenatal and maternity care, which can help you on your exciting journey through pregnancy. Also, there are students at Columbia with newborns and babies - you're likely to meet many while out walking (look for strollers!) or playing in the park.

While Medical Services on the Morningside campus does not provide prenatal care on site, you can begin the process with an annual check-up to discuss pre-pregnancy planning and/or confirm a pregnancy. By visiting Medical Services you can be referred to several resources in the community, including clinics and private obstetricians. To make an appointment at Medical Services, log in to Open Communicator. If you are a student at the Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC), contact the Student Health Service for more information on pre-pregnancy services offered.

Fortunately, the Columbia student insurance plan covers prenatal and maternity care. Moreover, the student insurance plan does not require referrals for prenatal or maternity care,
meaning you can go directly to a private obstetrician without first visiting Medical Services on campus (however keep in mind that referrals are required for many other off-campus medical services). If you choose to go directly to an obstetrician, your best bet is to look for one in the Aetna provider network (if your obstetrician is outside the Aetna network, your deductibles, out-of-pocket costs, such as co-pays and co-insurance, may increase).

Columbia student insurance benefits for prenatal care include physician's visits, lab services, prescriptions (except prenatal vitamins), and emergency care among other services. Newborns are also covered for sickness, accidents, and congenital defects for the first 31 days after birth, and can be enrolled as dependents on your insurance plan any time during this period. Check out the detailed Columbia Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) on the Columbia Health website to learn more about specific prenatal care and dependent benefits. This may help you make your decision concerning whether or not you need supplemental insurance. You can also discuss your insurance concerns anytime with a representative from the Columbia Insurance Office. If you are a student at the CUMC, contact the Student Health Services Insurance Customer Service for more information on coverage.

Many people in your situation also like to use this time to do pre-pregnancy planning. Some people call this "the 12 month pregnancy," since women and men can spend the first three months learning about and changing behaviors to increase the chances for having a healthy pregnancy and baby. Try visiting the March of Dimes website for more information and to get free literature on these topics. St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital, across the street from Columbia, has a Parent-Family Education Center, which offers many brief workshops including Lamaze and baby care.

In terms of breastfeeding support on campus for mothers, there are lactation rooms aplenty. Information on Columbia's Breastfeeding Support Program includes a list of locations for expressing breast milk on campus as well as general information on breastfeeding. Check out Pumping breast milk on campus at Columbia from the Go Ask Alice! archives for more information. You may want to contact the Office of Work/Life for more information on local childcare and schooling, the breastfeeding support program, lactation room locations and access, and how to purchase breast pump accessories.

Planning a pregnancy can bring up many concerns related to your own health and to insurance coverage. If you have more questions about the services and coverage Columbia provides, it would be a great idea for you and your husband to make an appointment with a health care provider and/or an insurance representative here on campus to get all the clarification you are looking for. Wishing you and your family the best through this exciting process!

Alice!

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Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: http://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/pre-pregnancy-planning-columbia

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