



Misconceptions about Pregnancy - mental_floss on YouTube (Ep. 4)

Misconceptions

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=e1X-rMIUBrY>

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Hi I'm Elliott and this is Mental Floss on YouTube. Today I'm going to talk about some misconceptions about pregnancy. Now, keep in mind that these are just general insights, okay, I'm not a doctor so if you're pregnant and have questions you should ask a medical professional. Also I'm not a pregnant woman, but I hope that was obvious.

[Intro Music]

Misconception Number 1: Pregnant women should not eat sushi. First of all, many Japanese women eat sushi throughout their pregnancies; that said, a lot of Western doctors will tell you to avoid raw fish and there is a list of fish that you shouldn't eat while pregnant which I'll get to in a moment. But the reason doctors tell you to avoid sushi is just in case you get a food-borne illness, which you could easily get from something like chicken. Regardless, most experts agree that if the fish is cooked or if you're eating veggie sushi, you're in the clear.

Which brings me to misconception number 2: Pregnant women should not eat fish. Fish you should avoid during pregnancy include: shark, king mackerel, swordfish, tilefish, marlin, and some kinds of tuna. Mercury levels are too risky in these fish. But, according to the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, the nutrients in some fish can be really great when it comes to a fetus's development. Many recommend salmon, which has low levels of mercury and is high in Omega-3 fatty acids, and even higher in deliciousness!

Misconception number 3: pregnant women shouldn't drink coffee. Cutting out coffee while pregnant used to be recommended, but as of 2010 the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists reviewed the scientific evidence and announced that less than 200 mg of caffeine a day would not increase risk of miscarriage or pre-term birth. This around 1 12-oz cup of coffee a day, but caffeine per cup varies from place to place, so be sure to double check.

Misconception number 4: you can tell the sex of a baby by how a pregnant woman looks or carries. Okay, um, first of all, you should refrain telling a pregnant woman that she looks a certain way, so she's destined to have a girl or boy or whatever, because you'll sound extremely rude and pretty old fashioned. But anyway, some swear that if a pregnant belly sags low that baby is a boy, whereas if the belly sits higher it's a girl. Some think that baby girls take some of their mothers' beauty, so prettier pregnant women are carrying a boy. I know...that's insane! Also, it's not true.

Misconception number 5: you can tell the sex of a baby by morning sickness. Actually, there is some truth to this misconception. If a woman experiences severe morning sickness, also known as hyperemesis gravidarum, in her first trimester, it's more likely that she's having a girl. But, in this case, doctors have put the odds of having a girl at around 55.7%, so yes, it's more likely, but not enough that you can make accurate predictions based on morning sickness. Although it's worth noting that women who are so sick they're hospitalized for more than 3 days have an 80% higher chance of having a girl than other women.

Misconception number 6: a pregnant woman is eating for two. I mean, technically, yes, she is, but the US Institute of Medicine recommends that a pregnant woman should eat an extra 340 calories during her second trimester and an extra 452 calories in her third. A doctor can give more specific numbers and recommendations to an individual, but it is incorrect to assume that pregnant women are doubling their typical diets. Because they're not. Consider yourself misconcepted.

Misconception number 7: you should not have a cat if you're pregnant. It's actually okay to have a cat or even pet a cat while you're pregnant. One rule, though: do not change its litterbox, okay?

This is to avoid the rare possibility of contracting toxoplasmosis, which could happen if its feces contain the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*.

Misconception number 8: pregnancy lasts 9 months. According to a study that the US National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences conducted in 2013, the average length from ovulation to birth is a little over 38 weeks, but they also found that there is five weeks of variability from woman to woman. Things that might affect the length of pregnancy include a woman's age and her own birth weight.

Misconception number 9: a pregnant woman cannot fly on an airplane during her last trimester. This is true depending on the airline, but it's not because traveling via airplane is harmful or risky. Most airlines just don't want to have to deal with women going into labor on their planes. I get it.

Misconception number 10: spicy food triggers labor. A 2011 study at Ohio State University surveyed 201 women who had recently given birth. Almost half of them had attempted to trigger labor using various methods learned from old wives' tales, including 22 women who ate spicy food. Jonathan Schaffir who conducted the study determined that by and large, labor is an issue that women have little or no control over. The best, safest thing to do is let Mother Nature take its course.

Thank you for watching Misconceptions on Mental Floss on YouTube, which is made with the help of all of these super nice people. If you have a topic for an upcoming Misconceptions episode that you would like to see, leave it in the comments and we'll totally do it! I will see you next week. We may not do. We'll choose one of them. There's a lot.