

# Protect Your Pregnancy

## The Importance of Prenatal Screening

### EXPERT ADVICE Prenatal Care

“The goal of prenatal care is to have a healthy mom and a healthy baby. Patients monitored by a health care provider have better outcomes, because early treatment can cure many problems and prevent others. Standard prenatal care patients should call their provider if they experience any of the following: vomiting for more than 24 hours, fever higher than 102°, vaginal bleeding like a period, a persistent severe headache, strong regular contractions before the ninth month, frequent or burning urination, severe abdominal pain not relieved by bowel movement, or absence of fetal movement.”



Matthew A. Roberts,  
DO, OB/GYN  
Associates in  
Women's Health  
1829 Gunbarrel  
Road B-1  
Chattanooga, TN  
37421  
(423) 899-0464  
awhealth.com



As you prepare to bring your baby into the world, it is important to pay close attention to factors that will ensure optimum health for both of you. The first step is to find a doctor or midwife you like and trust. Talk with friends and family about who they recommend and research area clinics and women's health centers. Chattanooga is filled with qualified, experienced physicians and health professionals who can help you navigate your pregnancy with success.

Early on in your pregnancy, your doctor or nurse practitioner can conduct several important tests to screen for congenital, genetic, or chromosomal problems. They can also run several tests to detect:

- Health problems in the mother such as gestational diabetes or high blood pressure that

can affect an unborn baby—the good news is these conditions are also treatable

- A baby's sex, size and age—these tests can also tell your doctor where and how your baby is positioned in your uterus
- Fetal abnormalities such as heart problems

The CDC reports that of the 4 million American women who give birth every year, nearly one-third have some kind of pregnancy-related complication. Beginning prenatal care as early as possible can ensure that no serious complication goes undetected. Plus, your health care provider can offer you important advice about diet, exercise, and prenatal vitamins that will strengthen you and your baby. ♥

Advanced Women's  
Health Specialists  
423.778.8921

Associates in  
Women's Health  
423.899.0464 Chattanooga  
706.861.4508 Ringgold  
423.910.0896 Ooltewah

Chattanooga Center  
for Women  
423.648.6020

Dr. John S. Adams,  
MD-OBGYN  
423.510.0250

Gynecologists  
Associated  
423.756.0863 Chattanooga  
706.937.5200 Ringgold

Premier Healthcare  
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Services  
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