Spring Break Safety for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women: Tips for a Fun and Safe Holiday

Spring break is often associated with young college students flocking to the beaches to take a break from their studies. However, it is now embraced by a diverse crowd, including families with pregnant and breastfeeding women. Spring break typically takes place between March and April each year, leading to masses of people traveling by planes, trains, and automobiles. Fun times are possible for everyone, and we have guidance to increase the chances that your travels and experiences will be comfortable and safe for you and your baby.

Check-In with Your Doctor

For most pregnant women, traveling by airline, train, car, or bus is generally safe until close to their due date. Regardless of your trimester, a quick check-in with your doctor is essential to ensure you are cleared to travel.

- **First Trimester**: If you are experiencing pregnancy-related nausea, prepare ahead with needed medications and a plan to stay hydrated.
- **Second Trimester**: If you are healthy, this is a great time to travel.
- **Third Trimester**: You should be fine to travel, but keep in mind that if you go into early labor, you don't want to be far from high-quality obstetrical care. Check for hospital locations at your destination.

Check for Infectious Disease Warnings

If you are traveling outside of the U.S., check for disease warnings or recommended vaccines for your destination on the CDC Travelers' Health page. Additionally, if your destination has mosquitoes, use insect repellants to reduce the risk of exposure to infectious diseases.

Sun Exposure and Heat

Prolonged sun exposure can lead to overheating and dehydration, and in severe cases, heat stroke. High fever is a potential concern for pregnant individuals in any trimester. Prevention is key:

- Keep hydrated.
- Protect against direct sun for prolonged periods (sit under an umbrella or go indoors).
- Use sunscreen.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Avoid alcohol and limit caffeine, as they can increase dehydration.

Sunscreen

Everyone, including pregnant and breastfeeding women, should use sunscreen year-round. While there is some evidence that chemical sunscreens can penetrate the body in very small amounts, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) recommends the use of effective sunscreen. For breastfeeding women,

remember that sun exposure does not provide enough vitamin D for your baby; the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends 400 IU of vitamin D daily for breastfed babies.

Dietary Concerns

One of the highlights of travel is enjoying local food. For pregnant women, the risks from food-borne illnesses remain the same whether at home or on vacation. Avoid unpasteurized milk products, undercooked meats, and fish from risky categories.

Alcohol

Alcoholic beverages may be a destination goal for many, but pregnant and breastfeeding women are urged to continue following the warnings:

- **Pregnant Women**: It is crucial to avoid alcohol, as there is no known safe amount to drink. The risks to the developing baby are significant and can be devastating. Increasingly, restaurants are creating delicious and inviting mocktails (non-alcohol) and other beverages, offering an alternative that does not single out a person from the crowd.
- **Breastfeeding Women**: Limiting alcohol is beneficial as it can decrease the amount of breastmilk produced. It is recommended to breastfeed after two hours per drink to reduce the risk of exposure to the baby and developing brain.

Following these recommendations and reminders can help prevent exposures and experiences that could later cause grief and anxiety. Prepare well and enjoy your holiday! Ideally, a well-planned spring break will lift your spirits, provide a mental health break, allow you to enjoy new or favored foods, and create new and wonderful memories.

References and Additional Information:

CDC:

https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/sun-exposure

https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/heat-stress/about/illnesses.html

https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/sun-exposure

https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding-special-circumstances/hcp/diet-micronutrients/vitamin-d.html

https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel

ACOG

https://www.acog.org/womens-health/faqs/travel-during-pregnancy

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org.

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