

Frequently Asked Questions about Centering Pregnancy

What is Centering Pregnancy?

Centering Pregnancy moves prenatal care from the exam room into group space to integrate the three major components of care: *health assessment, education, and support*. Eight to twelve women with similar gestational ages meet together, learning self-care skills, participating in a facilitated discussion, and developing a support network with other group members. Each pregnancy group meets for two hours for ten sessions throughout pregnancy and early postpartum. The practitioner, within the group space, completes standard physical health assessments.

Through this unique model of care, women are empowered to choose health-promoting behaviors. Health outcomes for pregnancies include reduced preterm birth, enhanced knowledge, improved breastfeeding initiation and duration and, in all studies, significantly improved patient satisfaction with prenatal care.

CenteringPregnancy groups provide a dynamic atmosphere for learning and sharing that is impossible to create in a one-to-one encounter. Hearing other women share concerns which mirror their own helps the woman to normalize the experience of pregnancy. Groups also are empowering as they provide support to the members and also increase individual motivation to learn and change. Professionals report that groups provide them with renewed satisfaction in delivering quality care.

How is Centering Pregnancy different than 1:1 prenatal care in the exam room?

There are many differences between group care and exam room care. Here are a few that make Centering unique.

- **Extended time with nurse practitioner/physician:** Over the course of the pregnancy, women spend 20 hours face to face with their provider allowing relaxed conversation and an opportunity to really feel heard and understood. In exam room care, women are only together with their provider for less than 2 hours over the course of the pregnancy.
- **Social Support/Community Building:** We are learning more and more about the benefits of social support and community in protecting pregnant women and babies from unnecessary stress. In Centering Pregnancy, social support and socializing is intentionally fostered and developed. Women tell us the group feels like a circle of friends sharing common concerns and the experience of pregnancy and parenting. Often the relationships developed in group extend past the pregnancy and women become friends.
- **No waiting:** Centering is designed to be respectful of women's time. Groups start and stop on time and something is happening all the time.

- **Education and learning:** CenteringPregnancy utilizes a facilitative leadership style that honors basic principles of adult education. It is not a didactic class format and in no way is the group leader viewed as the "teacher." Women learn as much or more from other women in the group and this contributes directly to an increasing sense of empowerment exhibited by each woman. There is always time to address common concerns of the group members.
- **Mom's Notebook** Women receive a Mom's Notebook developed for CenteringPregnancy. The materials in the notebook are used to guide the discussion in facilitated groups. The notebooks provide a written record of your pregnancy and provide take-home educational content. Women love these notebooks . They often become a keepsake to share with families and their new babies.
- **Self-care Activities:** Women are involved in self-care activities and are supported to learn to read and monitor their own blood pressure, weight gain, gestational age, fetal growth and other components of prenatal care. Involvement in self care leads to improved health behaviors and a feeling of empowerment.

Two hours seems like a long time for a prenatal visit. What happens during the two hours?

At the start of a Centering Pregnancy session, you will have a brief individual assessment by the care provider, participate in self-care activities, complete a Self-Assessment Sheet on a particular topic, enjoy refreshments, and have informal conversation with the other participants. When the group “circles up” together, there is facilitated discussion about topics of interest to pregnant women. There is time to practice skills such as breathing and relaxing and holding and comforting baby. Groups are lively, interactive, focused on issues important to you and are FUN.

Will I still get my ultrasounds and lab tests that I expect in prenatal care?

Centering Pregnancy is your prenatal care. The nurse practitioner or physician is responsible to see your care meets all the standards for prenatal care. The reason for and significance of testing and medications is often a topic for group discussion. Women in group tells us they better understand lab testing and medications prescribed during pregnancy. Labs, prescriptions and ultrasounds will be ordered for you as appropriate by your provider. Results of the lab tests and ultrasounds will be shared privately with you.

This is a "group." How is my privacy protected?

We are required to protect your privacy and take that responsibility seriously. The first or second prenatal visit which includes a pelvic exam is completed in the clinic in the privacy of an exam room. No pelvic exams are done in group. The space for the "belly check" within the group room is situated to enhance the feeling of privacy and safety. If you require an exam or have issues that require additional privacy, you will be seen in the exam room after group. Concerns about privacy are reduced after you understand how the assessment portion of the group works.

In addition, at the first group session, each person signs a Confidentiality Agreement and it is emphasized that a person's particular concerns should not be discussed outside the group setting. Ground rules agreed upon are posted in the group space and reviewed periodically. The decision to share information with the group is made by each person; no one ever is pressured to disclose personal concerns.

What is the cost of this type of prenatal care?

There is no additional charge to you for CenteringPregnancy. Your charges and/or co-pays are the same as if you had exam room care and are determined by your insurance coverage. The additional benefits of Centering such as Mom's Notebooks and refreshments are provided by grant funds and by CHI St. Alexius Health Dickinson.

I have problems with childcare. May I bring my children to my prenatal groups?

Children of any age find two hours in a group boring. Group time is a special time for women and they find children, their own or others, distracting. Two great things about group are that you will have the group schedule for your whole pregnancy and group starts and ends on time. For those reasons it is easier to make child care arrangements in advance. Also, children do not sign confidentially agreements and older children cannot be trusted to hold confidential what they may hear.

So please, no children.

(If for some reason you have no choice but to bring your child, you will be asked to bring a support person who can take the child out of the room when it becomes necessary. When children become disruptive or require attention we will ask that they be removed from the room.)

When do the groups meet? Groups are formed based on expected month of delivery. You will need to ask your provider's nurse to give you the day and time for the group that shares your due date. Groups meet together over six months, from early

pregnancy until middle of the due date month. The groups will meet monthly for four months, then every two weeks after that, for a total of 10 sessions. A "baby reunion" is scheduled after everyone has given birth. You will be given a complete schedule at your first group session.

Is Centering Pregnancy appropriate for everyone?

Most women expecting a normal pregnancy can enjoy and benefit from group prenatal care. If risk conditions emerge during the pregnancy, those conditions may be managed in group or may require additional visits to specialists. Some groups are formed to provide care to women who share a condition that increases risk such as diabetes. Ask your nurse practitioner or physician if Centering is right for you.