

Athena Care Pathway

Information for patients



Leeds
Maternity Care

This leaflet provides information about the pregnancy Athena care pathway. The Athena care pathway is designed for pregnant people with a body mass index of 40 kg/m² or more at the start of pregnancy and is delivered by specialist midwives.

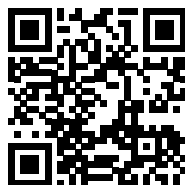
What is the Athena Pathway?

- The Athena Pathway offers **additional pregnancy wellness support**, in addition to your community midwife routine appointments.
- The **Athena Specialist Midwives** provide **extra contact** points in your pregnancy.
- Extra contact points provide an opportunity to support you with personalised care planning and optimising your health and wellbeing.

Your Athena Pathway Specialist Midwives can be contacted via the email below or scan the QR code:

leedsth-tr.athenaclinic@nhs.net

Email contact will usually be answered within 7 working days.



Contents

Page 02	What is the Athena Pathway?
Page 03	Contents
Page 04	Benefits to you
Page 05	Flow chart
Page 07	Initial Athena Pathway Contact
Page 08	2nd Athena Pathway Contact
Page 09	3rd Athena Pathway Contact
Page 11	Useful information on physical activity during pregnancy
Page 13	Pelvic Floor Health
Page 14	Pelvic floor muscle training
Page 15	Healthy Eating
Page 16	Eating well tips
Page 17	Healthy Start Scheme
Page 18	Preparing for later pregnancy and birth
Page 19	Anaesthetic Information
Page 20	Pregnancy and Birth Information Resources
Page 21	Health and Wellbeing after Birth
Page 22	Post Birth Health

Benefits to you

- Additional midwife contact points, support and personalised care by telephone or video call.
- Additional tools and resources to help keep you focused on your health and well-being.
- Additional support to reduce your chances of developing diabetes during pregnancy, high blood pressure and other pregnancy complications.
- Obtain a **FREE Active Leeds Pass** to access unlimited swim and yoga during pregnancy and post birth in selected community centres and Leeds Council leisure centres around Leeds.

Scan or click QR code to apply for your
Free Active Leeds Pass /Bump & Baby
Fit Referral Form



- An opportunity to join midwife-led wellness walks with other pregnant people and new mums.
- An opportunity to connect with other pregnant people and new mums through a dedicated Instagram social media page.
- Feel well, manage pregnancy symptoms and enjoy your pregnancy!

Patient quote:

"I found the conversations sensitive and super empowering. I loved that I could have midwifery-led care"

Diane, first time mum

Flow Chart

This flow chart shows the Athena pathway appointment schedule and is in addition to your normal community midwife care appointments:

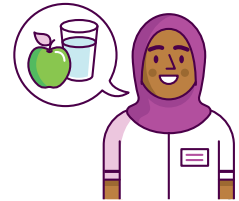
1. Initial booking

- ✓ After booking with your community midwife, an Athena midwife will contact you, usually within a week by telephone.



2. Initial contact

- ✓ Telephone contact from an Athena midwife around 1-2 weeks after your booking appointment to introduce the Athena pathway. Discussions will include:
- ✓ Healthy eating, self-care and keeping active in pregnancy.
- ✓ Introduction to the free Active Leeds offer and relevant living resources.



3. 2nd Athena Pathway contact

- ✓ Telephone or video call contact from an Athena midwife between 14-18 weeks of pregnancy. Discussions will include:
- ✓ Ongoing personalised wellness support and information and resources on pregnancy vitamins, vaccinations and self-care.



4. 3rd Athena Pathway contact

- ✓ Telephone or video call contact from an Athena midwife between 21-24 weeks of pregnancy. Discussions will include:
- ✓ Review of personalised wellness plan and how this can continue to the end of pregnancy.
- ✓ Anaesthetic team referral offer if applicable, connecting with like-minded peers, baby movements in pregnancy, antenatal education classes and feeding your baby.



Reminder

Remember Athena pathway care is additional to your regular pregnancy care. We recommend continuing to attend routine pregnancy care with your community midwife and any additional scans or appointments you are offered by the hospital.

Additional care offers

- Additional growth ultrasound scans will be offered at 32 and 36 weeks and possibly 39 weeks as required.
- A blood sugar test will be offered to check for chances of developing diabetes in pregnancy at 26-28 weeks. If you have had Gestational Diabetes before, this test will be offered earlier around the time of your dating scan.
- Moving and handling assessments may be offered by an Athena midwife around 36 weeks of pregnancy to assist with safe birth planning.

Initial Athena Pathway Contact (1-2 weeks after your booking appointment)

1. What we'll talk about

- Optimising **pregnancy wellness** for you and your baby.
- **Supporting your mind and body:** Eating well, movement, sleep, vitamins, self-care and relaxation.
- **What's important to you:** We're here to support you and talk about any worries or issues you might have.
- **Other care offers such as:**
 - Blood Sugar Test to check for diabetes in pregnancy.
 - Low Molecular Weight Heparin Injections if indicated
- **Your upcoming appointments:** Details about your next Athena appointments in your pregnancy.

Scan or click the QR code to watch our antenatal education class on healthy living in pregnancy.



Patient quote:

"The Athena Midwives supported me throughout pregnancy with keeping active- they helped me to stay motivated which helped me control my weight gain"

Jenna, Leeds

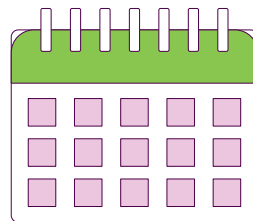
2nd Athena Pathway Contact (Between 14-18 weeks of pregnancy)

1. What we'll talk about

- **How You're Feeling:** We will ask you about your physical and emotional wellbeing, offering support with any lingering pregnancy symptoms.
- **Pregnancy Progress:** How your pregnancy is going and answer any questions you may have.
- **Your wellness journey:** We will review your wellness and self-care plan.
- **Stress & Self-Care Tips:** Share ways to manage stress, sleep well and take care of yourself.
- **Wellness Tips:** Discuss how to keep moving, eat well and take time to reflect.

2. Next Steps

- **Book Your Appointment:** Schedule your next Athena pathway contact in.



3rd Athena Pathway Contact (Between 21-24 weeks of pregnancy)

1. What we'll talk about

- **Preparing for later stages of pregnancy and birth:** As you enter the final stretch of your pregnancy, focus on winding down, resting and relaxing.
- **Scan Results:** Chat about how your routine scan went and offer additional scans as necessary.
- Discuss any **worries** and **extra support** you may need.

2. Continued self-care discussions

- **Healthy Habits:** Focus on eating well, adapting activities to your stage of pregnancy, and relaxation techniques to feel good.
- **Managing Stress:** Learn ways to handle stress and get ready for your baby with positive birth affirmations.
- **Baby Preparation:** Learn about and discuss feeding your baby, activities you can do with your baby and post birth support.



What are the benefits of being active in pregnancy?

- Keeping active keeps both **you and your baby** healthy
- Helps control **weight** gain.
- Helps prevent diabetes in pregnancy.
- Improves **sleep**.
- Helps to maintain a healthy **blood pressure**.
- Helps boost your **mood** and mental well-being.
- Helps **recovery** post-birth.

Daily moderate intensity physical activity means doing activities that make you breathe faster and feel warmer, but you can still talk without too much difficulty.

Examples include brisk walking, carrying light shopping bags, swimming, household chores, cycling at a moderate pace, or dancing. It's a good way to stay healthy and active during pregnancy, and great to do with friends and family.

Join us on wellness walks to meet other pregnant women and get moving socially.

Scan or click the QR code to open the Moving Medicine leaflet with top tips to stay active during pregnancy.



Active Leeds

- Offers free pregnancy and postnatal yoga classes in community and leisure centres across Leeds.
- Provides Bump and Baby Fit sessions before and after birth, plus free swimming during pregnancy and up to one year post-birth at Leeds City Council Leisure Centres.
- Runs parent/carer and baby yoga sessions in selected community centres.

Scan or click the QR code for more information



Useful information on physical activity during pregnancy

Active Pregnancy Foundation

Scan or click the QR code for information from the Active Pregnancy Foundation.



Tommy's Pregnancy Hub - Staying active in pregnancy

Scan or click the QR code for Tommy's Pregnancy Hub top 10 tips for staying active in pregnancy.



Physical activity recommendations for pregnant people:



Available from

- <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/620a28288fa8f54916f45dfc/physical-activity-for-pregnant-women.pdf>

Pelvic Floor Health

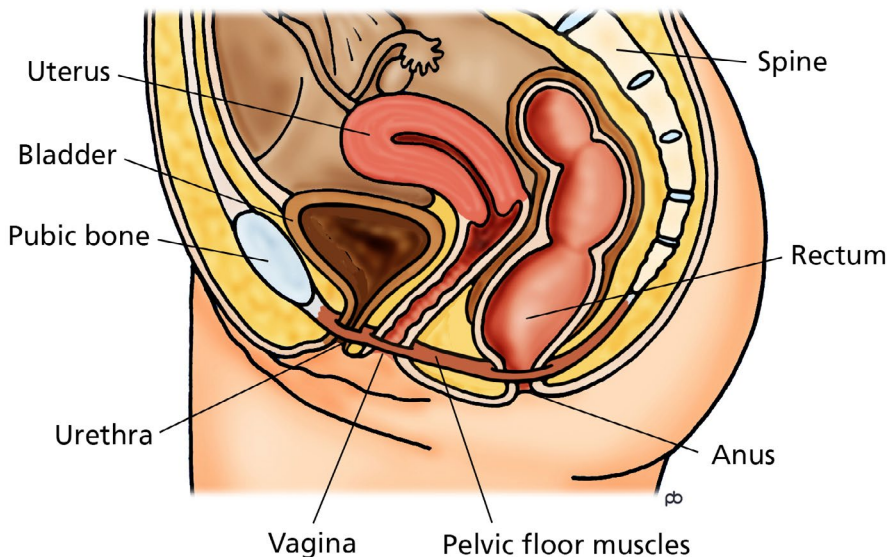
What is the pelvic floor?

- The pelvic floor consists of layers of muscles that stretch like a supportive hammock from the pubic bone (at the front) to the tailbone (coccyx) at the back.

Why is it important to train the pelvic floor muscles?

- Pelvic floor muscles help to support your bladder, bowel and vaginal function.
- There is high quality evidence that it is important to take care of your pelvic floor muscles in pregnancy.
- If your pelvic floor muscles are weak, you may find that you leak urine when you cough, sneeze or strain.

Illustration showing where the pelvic floor muscles are



Pelvic floor muscle training

Easy steps for pelvic floor muscle training:

- **Find the Right Muscles:** To locate your pelvic floor muscles, engage your back passage imagining you are stopping yourself breaking wind, followed by engaging your front passage as if you are stopping yourself passing urine. You should feel a lift and tightening sensation in your vaginal region.
- **Practice the Squeeze:** Tighten your pelvic floor muscles for up to 10 seconds, then relax for the same amount of time.
- **Repeat:** Aim to complete these long squeezes 10 times, followed by 10 quick 1 second hold repetitions. You can do this while sitting, standing, or lying down.
- **Focus:** Make sure to only tighten your pelvic floor muscles, not your stomach, thighs, or buttocks. Breathe normally during the exercises.

Visual Guide

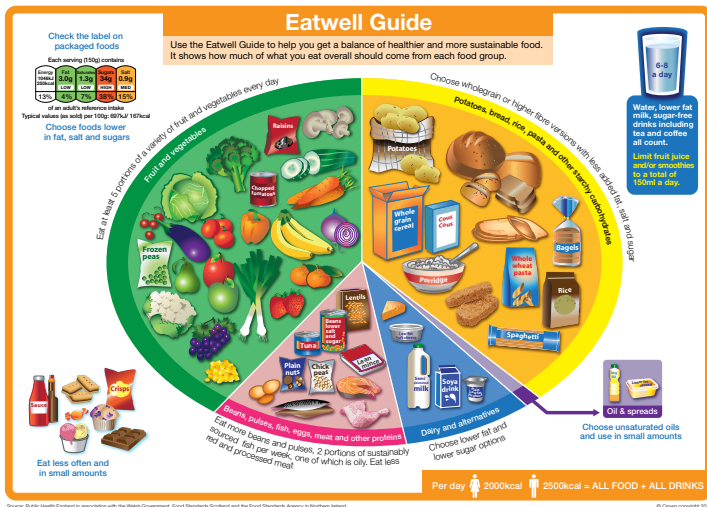
The NHS Squeezy App can show you how to do these exercises.

Scan or click the QR code for more info!



Healthy Eating

- Eating well during pregnancy supports both you and your baby's health.
- The **NHS Eatwell Guide** is a visual tool that shows you how to eat a balanced diet by including different foods from each food group:
 - **Fruits and vegetables:** for vitamins, minerals and fibre
 - **Starchy foods:** like bread and rice for energy
 - **Proteins:** like meat and beans to build and repair body tissues
 - **Dairy and alternatives:** for strong bone development.
 - **Small amounts of oils and spreads:** for healthy fats.



Reminder: Enjoy a variety of healthy foods from the Eatwell Guide.

For more detailed information on the Eatwell Guide, please scan or click the QR code.



Eating well tips

- **Eat a Variety:** Fill your plate with lots of fruits and vegetables.
- **Add Nuts and Seeds:** They're great for protein and healthy fats (avoid if allergic)
- **Limit Sugar and Carbohydrates:** Keep carbs to about a third of your meal and limit foods with added sugar such as cakes and sweets.
- **Meal Prep:** Prepare meals ahead of time, batch cook and try easy homecooked recipes.
- **Portion size:** Eating for two during pregnancy is a common myth. Your body needs good quality nutrients rather than extra calories to support your baby's growth.
- **Drink Swaps:** Avoid alcohol and limit caffeine to 200mg per day throughout pregnancy. Decaffeinated tea and coffee can be a good swap.

Food Safety

Please scan or click the QR code for NHS information on food safety during pregnancy.



Healthy Start Scheme

Get financial support to buy fruits, vegetables, pulses, milk and vitamins.

What is NHS Healthy Start?

Healthy Start provides financial support to pregnant people and families on a low income to help them access fruits, vegetables, pulses, milk and get the vitamins needed for healthy development.

You may qualify for Healthy Start vouchers if you're at least 10 weeks pregnant or have a child under four years old and are also in receipt of certain benefits.

What do I receive?

If eligible, you can get payments every 4 weeks to spend on:

- Cow's milk
- Fresh, frozen or tinned fruit and vegetables
- Infant formula milk based on cow's milk
- Fresh, dried, and tinned pulses

You can also get free Healthy Start vitamins.

For more information and to apply to the NHS Healthy Start scheme

Scan or click the QR code to visit the Healthy Start Website for more information.



Tips for eating healthy on a budget

- **Frozen and Canned Options:** Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are often cheaper and last longer, making them cost-effective options.
- **Buy in Bulk:** Items like rice, pasta, and beans are often cheaper when bought in bulk.
- **Batch Cooking:** Prepare large portions of meals and freeze them for later use.

Preparing for later pregnancy and birth

Final Tips for the Third Trimester

- **Rest and Activity:** Prioritise rest and gentle activities like walking or swimming.
- **Birth Plan:** Think about your birth plan but stay flexible.

Antenatal Appointments and Maternity Rights

- **Paid Time Off:** You're entitled to paid time off for pregnancy-related appointments, including scans, health checks, and classes like Active Leeds Bump and Baby Fit.
- **Employer Letter:** If needed, a letter for your employer can be provided to confirm your right to time off.

Scan or click the QR code for more information on maternity employee rights.



Anaesthetic Information

Whether you are considering having an epidural or not for pain relief during birth, this video link from our local Anaesthetic team may help to answer questions you may have on anaesthetic pain relief options, when they may be offered and the role of the anaesthetic team during birth.

You may be offered a consultation with the Anaesthetic team during the later stages of pregnancy to inform birth planning.

Scan or click the QR code to access the Obstetric Anaesthesia and Maternal Weight Video on the trust website.



Pregnancy and Birth Information Resources

- **Labour and birth preparation video:** Topics Covered: Hormones and stages of labour, pain relief options, different birth modes (vaginal, caesarean, assisted births), tips for birth partners, and what to expect after birth.

Scan or click the QR code to access the Labour and birth preparation video.



- **Preparing for Birth and Beyond (PBB):** are free local online and in-person antenatal education classes.

Scan or click the QR code to access and book online.



- **Preparing to Breastfeed:** this class gets wonderful feedback and is well attended. Even if you are planning to formula feed your baby, knowledge on the microbiome and tips on colostrum harvesting may be of great benefit to you and your family!

Scan or click the QR code or email the address below to reserve your place.

leedsth-tr.preparingtobreastfeed@nhs.net



Health and Wellbeing after Birth

- **6-8 week post birth GP appointment:** This is a routine offer to all with the aim to assess your physical and emotional well-being, discuss healing from birth, address any concerns, and provide guidance on contraception, post birth recovery. If you are overdue a cervical smear due to pregnancy - you can arrange a future day for this too.
- You can get pregnant as little as 3 weeks after the birth of a baby. If you have birthed your baby by Caesarean Section, it is generally recommended to have a period of between 12-18 months before trying for another baby- to allow a longer time for the scar on your uterus to heal fully. Information on sex and contraception choices after birth can be found on the NHS website.

Scan or click the QR code for information on sex and contraception choices after birth.



Post Birth Health

After the birth of your baby, it is important to **continue to eat a healthy, balanced diet** to support post birth recovery and an ongoing healthy lifestyle.

For more information on keeping fit and healthy with a baby, please scan or click the QR code for NHS advice.



Regular, moderate movement post birth is known to reduce your chances of developing type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease.

It can also **help you to lose weight and feel more energised improving mental wellbeing.**

A healthy weight in a future pregnancy can help reduce your chances of experiencing a miscarriage and stillbirth or developing pre-eclampsia and/or gestational diabetes.

- **Pelvic floor exercises:** after birth can help aid recovery, reduce incontinence and even help sex to feel better!

Scan or click the QR code for more information on your post pregnancy body.



Physical activity for women after childbirth (birth to 12 months)



Available from

- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/620a2ff9d3bf7f4f0ec9b574/postpartum_infographic.pdf



What did you think of your care?

Visit: www.leedsth.nhs.uk/patients/support/feedback-complaints/friends-family-test/

Scan or click the QR code - Your views matter

© The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust • 1st Edition Version 1
Developed by: Jenny Roddy, Consultant Midwife and Health Equity Specialist
Midwives in collaboration with academic colleagues at Leeds University.
Produced by: Medical Illustration Services • MID code: 20250324_002/MH

LN006029
Publication date
01/2026
Review date
01/2029