



PRECONCEPTION HEALTH EDUCATION AND RESOURCES

Planning for Pregnancy

If you are trying to have a baby or are just thinking about it, it is not too early to start getting ready for pregnancy. Preconception health and health care focus on things you can do before and between pregnancies to increase the chances of having a healthy baby.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR

Before getting pregnant, talk with your health care provider about preconception health care.

Your provider will want to discuss things like:

- Health history
- Medical conditions you currently have that could affect a pregnancy
- HIV status
- Previous pregnancy issues
- Medicines you currently are taking
- Vaccinations you might need
- Steps you can take before pregnancy to help prevent certain birth defects

Lifestyle and Behaviors

Health care professionals can help you with counseling, treatment and other support services.

Talk with your health care provider if you:

- Smoke
- Vape
- Drink alcohol
- Use certain drugs
- Live in a stressful or abusive environment

Medications

Talk with your health care providers before starting or stopping any medicines. Be sure to discuss the following with your providers:

- All medicines you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, herbal and dietary supplements and vitamins
- Best ways to keep any health conditions you have under control
- Your personal goals and preferences for the health of you and your baby

Vaccinations (Shots)

Most vaccines are safe during pregnancy and some, such as the flu vaccine and Tdap (adult tetanus, diphtheria and acellular pertussis vaccine), are specifically recommended during pregnancy.

Learn about [vaccinations during pregnancy](#) and more about [COVID-19 vaccines while pregnant or breastfeeding](#).

Having the right vaccinations at the right time can help keep you healthy and help protect your baby from some diseases during the first few months of life.

GET 400 MICROGRAMS OF FOLIC ACID EVERY DAY

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges all people who can become pregnant to get 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid each day from fortified foods or prenatal vitamins, or a combination of the two. In addition, be sure to eat a varied diet rich in folate, which can help prevent major birth defects.

STOP DRINKING ALCOHOL, SMOKING/VAPING AND USING DRUGS

Smoking, drinking alcohol and using certain drugs can cause many problems during pregnancy, such as premature birth, birth defects and infant death.

If you are trying to get pregnant and cannot stop drinking, smoking, vaping or using drugs, contact your health care provider, local Alcoholics Anonymous or local alcohol treatment center. (See resources below.)

AVOID TOXIC SUBSTANCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS

Avoid harmful chemicals, environmental contaminants and other toxic substances such as synthetic chemicals, some metals, fertilizer, bug spray and cat or rodent feces around the home and in the workplace. These substances can hurt the reproductive systems of men and women.

GET HEALTHY MENTALLY

Mental health is how we think, feel and act as we cope with life. To be at your best, you need to feel good about your life and value yourself. Everyone feels worried, anxious, sad or stressed sometimes.

However, if these feelings do not go away and they interfere with your daily life, get help. Talk with your health care provider about your feelings and treatment options.

REACH AND MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

People who are [overweight or obese](#) have a higher risk for many serious conditions, including complications during pregnancy, heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and certain cancers (endometrial, breast and colon). People who are underweight are also at risk for serious health problems.

The key to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight isn't about short-term dietary changes. It's about a lifestyle that includes healthy eating and regular physical activity.

If you are underweight, overweight or obese, talk with your doctor about ways to reach and maintain a healthy weight before you get pregnant.

LEARN YOUR FAMILY HISTORY

Collecting your family's health history can help you identify factors that might affect your baby during infancy or childhood or your ability to become pregnant.

Your doctor might refer you for genetic counseling, based on your family health history or other reasons, including:

- Having had several miscarriages or infant deaths
- Trouble getting pregnant (infertility)
- Having a genetic condition or birth defect that occurred during a previous pregnancy

Helpful Resources

Preconception Care (CDC):

[Preconception Health and Health Care Is Important for All](#)

Alcohol and Drug Support:

[Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator](#)

[Locate an Alcoholics Anonymous \(A.A.\) Program Near You](#)

Smoking and Vaping Support:

1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)

[NYS Smokers' Quitline](#) 1-866-NY-QUITS; text "QUITNOW" to 333888

SOURCE: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#); Last Reviewed Jan. 2023

