

Plan for a Healthy Pregnancy

To help a pregnancy get off to a good start, take these steps before you get pregnant:

- Get a medical checkup. Discuss your medical history and your family medical history with your doctor.
- Do you have a chronic medical problem, such as asthma, diabetes, or high blood pressure? If you do, ask your doctor if changes need to be made in your treatment plan.
- Find out what medicines you can take. Ask which ones you should not take. Tell or show your doctor all prescribed and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, herbal products, etc. that you take. Ask if you need to change any of these while you try to get pregnant.
- Take 400 to 800 micrograms (.4 to .8 milligrams) of folic acid every day. This B vitamin can help prevent serious birth defects of the brain and spine. Make sure you take folic acid for at least one month before you get pregnant. Women who have had a baby with a serious problem of the brain or spine should take the amount of folic acid their doctors advise.



- Discuss current and past birth control methods. Ask what method you should use until you decide to get pregnant.
- If you or your partner has a family history of sickle-cell disease, Tay-Sachs disease, etc., get genetic counseling. Do this, too, if you are older than age 35 or if your partner is age 60 or older.
- Do you smoke? Do you take street drugs? If so, now is the time to quit. Get help if you need it.
- Stop or limit alcohol use. This will make it easier to go without it when you are pregnant.
- Get vaccines, as advised by your doctor.
- Avoid exposure to X-rays.
- Eat healthy foods. These include:
 - Fruits and vegetables.
 - Whole grain breads and cereals.
 - Low-fat dairy foods and other calcium-rich foods.
- Caffeine is okay for women planning to get pregnant, but limit it to 400 milligrams a day. This is the amount in about two 8-ounce cups of coffee. Follow your doctor's advice for caffeine during pregnancy.
- Get regular exercise.
- If you are overweight, lose weight before you get pregnant.

For Information, Contact:

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