

## Healthy Women



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## Promoting Good Health Before Pregnancy

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Good health and health care before pregnancy, also known as **preconception care**, will help you achieve a healthy and happy pregnancy. If you are planning to become pregnant you should make an appointment with your doctor to discuss preconception care. Planning for your pregnancy early is the first step in making healthy choices that benefit both you and your baby. Some examples of topics to talk about are listed below.

### *Make Healthy Nutrition and Exercise Habits*

Your doctor will review your diet, weight, eating habits, and exercise routine. It is important to try to achieve a healthy weight before you become pregnant because dieting during pregnancy may deny the baby certain nutrients. ACOG recommends that women of reproductive age should take 0.4 milligrams of folic acid daily to reduce the risk of birth defects of the brain and spine, also known as neural tube defects. Thirty (30) minutes of moderate exercise most days is recommended.

### *Discuss your Medical Conditions*

Preexisting medical conditions require special attention during pregnancy. Treatment regimes before and during pregnancy may be changed for women who have diabetes, high blood pressure, seizures, heart disease, or are obese.

### *Know your Family History*

Your doctor will want to know about complications which may have occurred in previous deliveries as well as your family history of disease. Certain disorders can be inherited; these are known as genetic disorders. Cystic fibrosis is an example of one disorder doctors may test for.

### *Stay Current with Vaccines*

Being up to date with your vaccinations is important to prevent infection in you and your fetus. Receiving certain vaccinations before pregnancy is necessary because some are not safe to receive during pregnancy.

### *Avoid Alcohol, Tobacco and Illegal Drugs*

Smoking, drinking, and drug use can harm the baby. If you are using these substances, now is a good time to quit. Your doctor may be able to refer you for counseling or treatment.

### *Know your Environment*

Certain substances found at work or home can affect fertility in men and women and affect the health of your fetus. If there are substances which you are concerned about, discuss those with your doctor. Some examples of harmful substances are solvents used in photography, metals such as lead and mercury, and some pesticides.

### *Prevent Infection*

Prevention and detection of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is important for you, your partner, and your fetus. Many STDs may affect your ability to become pregnant and may also cause harm to your fetus. If you think you have an STD you and your partner should be tested and treated right away.

### *Seek Help for Abuse*

Women who are victims of domestic violence are even more vulnerable to abuse during their pregnancy. If you are being abused tell your doctor, nurse, or social worker and they can help you get in touch with the support services you need.

For more information, please visit: [www.acog.org](http://www.acog.org) & [www.marchofdimes.com](http://www.marchofdimes.com)

*The information in this column does not dictate an exclusive course of treatment or procedure to be followed and should not be construed as excluding other acceptable methods of practice. As always, women should consult their obstetrician-gynecologist when making health care decisions.*