

## Preconception

**Categories :** [Children and Families](#), [First Time Mothers](#), [Health Issues](#)

Preconception is the time before you become pregnant. If you are thinking about having a baby, you should seek Preconception Health Care to begin the process of managing conditions and behaviors that could present risks for you or your baby, because some of the baby's most important development happens before you even know that you are pregnant!

### Make Sure You Are Healthy Before Getting Pregnant!

Being healthy before you get pregnant may improve your chances for a healthy birth outcome for your baby. To be as healthy as possible before becoming pregnant:

- Take folic acid every day. This B vitamin promotes healthy development of a baby's brain and spinal cord. The baby's brain and spinal cord grow in the first month of pregnancy, before most women even know they are pregnant. All women who of childbearing age should take vitamins that have folic acid. The usual dose is at least 400 micrograms daily. To read more, read the [March of Dimes paper](#) on folic acid.
- If you smoke, stop smoking. Don't do drugs or drink alcohol. If you need help to stop, tell your health care provider or dial 2-1-1 for a referral to an appropriate program.
- Get regular health care checkups.
- Have vaccinations up to date.
- Talk to your health care provider about any prescribed or over the counter medicines or supplements that you are taking, to make sure they are safe for you and your unborn baby during your pregnancy.
- Stay away from toxic or hazardous materials at work or at home
- Wash hands well after being in contact with bacteria or viruses; do not expose yourself to cat litter or to rodents.
- Avoid raw meat or fish and unpasteurized milk products; wash all raw fruit and vegetables well.
- Tell your health care provider if you have had a premature birth, a miscarriage or an abortion.
- Get counseling to promote healthy behaviors such as weight control, nutrition, exercise and stress reduction.
- Genetic counseling is a good idea if you, your partner, or anyone in your families have genetic conditions that may affect your pregnancy or your baby.
- See your dentist regularly and treat gum disease before you get pregnant.

*Remember...The healthier you are before you become pregnant, the better it will be for you and your baby!*

### Fathers and Preconception

Men play an important role in supporting and encouraging their partners to be as healthy as possible in the preconception stage. There are also preconception steps that fathers can take to promote a healthy birth outcome for his baby:

- Men who work with chemicals and other potentially harmful substances should be careful not to expose their partners to these substances. For example, men who may have chemicals on their work clothes should keep these clothes separate from other laundry, and wash them separately.
- The father's family health history is important to know when planning a pregnancy, so that health providers can give the most accurate advice about how to have the healthiest outcome for the mother and the baby.
- Fathers should be screened for and treated for any sexually transmitted diseases; in order to make sure



these illnesses are not passed on to female partners.

- Cut or eliminate use of drugs, alcohol, or tobacco to improve reproductive health.
- Men who smoke should not smoke around their partners, to avoid the harmful effects of second-hand smoke.

### **Preconception Resources In Your Community**

Dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-203-1234 for more information about Preconception Care, to find a health care provider in your area, or to get referrals for smoking cessation, and drug/alcohol treatment programs. 2-1-1 can also talk to you about health care options if you are uninsured.

### **Websites with Information About Preconception:**

- Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/preconception/index.html>
- Planned Parenthood: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/pregnancy/pre-pregnancy-planning>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <https://www.womenshealth.gov/>

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