



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF  
OBSTETRICIANS AND  
GYNECOLOGISTS

## Good Health Before Pregnancy: Preconceptional Care

Pregnancy is a major event. If you plan for it, you can make wise choices that will benefit both your health and that of your baby.

### **A Preconceptional Visit**

If you are planning to become pregnant, you should let your doctor know.

### **Special Concerns**

#### ***Medical Conditions***

Some women have medical problems, such as diabetes (high blood sugar), high blood pressure and cardiovascular (heart and blood vessel) problems, that may increase risks for them or their fetus. Your doctor will discuss your current treatment with you before you are pregnant.

You should tell your doctor if you are taking medications, either prescribed or bought over the counter. Some can harm your fetus.

#### ***Infections and Vaccinations***

Infections can harm both the mother and the fetus.

Vaccination can prevent some infections. If you have not been vaccinated for diseases such as measles, mumps and rubella, tell your doctor.

Infections passed through sexual contact — sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) — also are harmful during pregnancy.

#### ***Past Pregnancies***

Some problems with past pregnancies can occur again. Therefore, your doctor will ask questions about any past pregnancies. If you have had more than one miscarriage or a previous baby with a birth defect.

#### ***Family Health History***

Some conditions occur more often in families. If a close member of your family has a history of a disorder, you may be at greater risk of having it, too.

Certain disorders can be inherited. These are called genetic disorders.

Testing can be done to detect some genetic disorders.

### **Lifestyle**

Your doctor may ask about your family life, work and lifestyle to learn of any behaviors and exposures that could be a risk.

#### ***Diet and Nutrition***

Your doctor will review your diet. He or she may suggest changes in areas such as:

- Your weight
- Your use of vitamins and other food supplements
- Your eating habits, such as a vegetarian diet or fasting

- Any eating disorders you may have

**Keeping Fit**

Good health depends on both a proper diet and exercise.

If you need to lose weight, you should do so before pregnancy and again after giving birth.

**Domestic Violence**

Victims of domestic violence before pregnancy often are victims during pregnancy. If you are being abused, tell your doctor.

**Alcohol, Tobacco and Illegal Drugs**

Alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drugs can harm both you and your fetus. No amount of these substances has been proven safe to use during pregnancy.

Cigarette smoking can cause premature birth, low birth weight, premature rupture of membranes, and problems with the placenta. The risk of the baby dying from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) also is increased.

**Environment**

Some substances found at home or work may harm your fetus if you become pregnant.

If you could be exposed to a harmful substance, take steps to avoid it.

**Planning for Support During Pregnancy**

Pregnancy may put a lot of demands on you and your family. As you plan your pregnancy, talk with your family about it.

Also, having a baby can cost a lot. As part of your plans, find out whether your health insurance pays for the cost of prenatal care, birth and well-baby care.

Find out how much time your employer allows for maternity leave for pregnancy.

**Finally ...**

Becoming a parent is a major commitment filled with challenges, rewards and choices. Make a few changes now: keep fit, eat wisely, avoid things that could be harmful, and visit your doctor.

*This excerpt from ACOG's Patient Education Pamphlet is provided for your information. It is not medical advice and should not be relied upon as a substitute for visiting your doctor. If you need medical care, have any questions, or wish to receive the full text of this Patient Education Pamphlet, please contact your obstetrician-gynecologist.*

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