

Planning for Pregnancy BEFORE YOUR NEXT PREGNANCY

Background

For most women and their children, it is best to wait until your baby is at least 12-18 months old before becoming pregnant again. Your body needs time to adjust, both physically and emotionally, to the birth of your baby. More than half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned. Much of a baby's development occurs within the first few weeks of pregnancy. That is why it is important to make sure you are as healthy as possible before becoming pregnant again.

Your Health

Choosing to wait 12-18 months before becoming pregnant again is a better choice for your overall health. Your body needs time to physically recover from the birth of a child, in order to grow a healthy baby again.

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Most parents experience stress when caring for a new baby. Stress can increase if you become pregnant again before you are ready. Your risk of having postpartum depression is higher if your pregnancies are too close together. During pregnancy, it is important to focus on caring for yourself and your growing baby. This is harder to do when already caring for a very young child.

The Health of Your Next Child

Waiting 12-18 months before becoming pregnant again is also better for the health of your next child. If you do not wait, your next baby has a higher risk of being born prematurely (too early—less than 38 weeks). These babies are more likely to have:

- Feeding problems
- Difficulty breathing
- Jaundice
- Slow weight gain
- Learning problems

If you have already had a child that was born prematurely (less than 38 weeks), your risk for having another child born too soon is even higher. That is why it is important if you have already had a child prematurely to wait 12-18 months before becoming pregnant again.

What You Can Do

1) If you do not want another pregnancy right now, choose the best birth control method for you, even if you are breastfeeding.

2) As you think about planning your family, be sure to: stop smoking and stay quit, take a vitamin with folic acid every day, avoid all other drugs, including alcohol, and talk to your health care provider about how to manage your weight and any health conditions such as, diabetes, asthma, or high blood pressure.



WISCONSIN ASSOCIATION
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Developed by the WAPC Preconception and Prenatal Care Committee, 6/2010

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Planning for Pregnancy

BECOMING A FATHER

Background

Men are important in the creation of a baby. The health of a new baby is influenced by men as well as women. New studies are reporting that a man's health at the time of conception has more of an effect on the health of the baby than previously thought. If you are healthy before you make a baby, then you are more likely to have a healthy baby.

How the Father Affects Pregnancy

Your behaviors and attitudes can have an effect on your partner's pregnancy. For example, exposing your partner to secondhand smoke during her pregnancy is just as harmful to the developing baby as if she were smoking herself. If you smoke, consider quitting or smoke outdoors as far away from your partner as possible. Stress can also have a negative effect on the pregnancy. Women who experience stress may be more likely to deliver a baby too early or too small. Having a positive and supportive attitude can make a real difference in the health of your baby.

How Pregnancy Affects the Father

Pregnancy can be both a joyful and stressful time. Men can sometimes feel left out, but you can play an active role in the pregnancy. Talk with your partner about the pregnancy and plans for the baby. Learn about the changes that your partner will be going through during the pregnancy. Take classes together to prepare for the birth of your baby. Being an active participant will allow you to be better prepared to support each other and prepare for the birth of your baby.

Your Health

Some factors that can affect a man's ability to conceive a healthy baby include:

- Diabetes
- Excessive use of alcohol or drugs
- High blood pressure
- Some genetic conditions
- Stress
- Smoking cigarettes
- Unhealthy diet

The Health of Your Sperm

The health of a man's sperm is just as important as the health of a woman's egg. The health of your sperm, whether it be a low sperm count or quality of sperm, could be affected by:

- Age — studies have shown a link between older fathers and increased incidence of autism
- Childhood conditions or illnesses, such as undescended testicles or mumps
- Environmental hazards at work or home
- Overheated testicles caused by exposure to high heat (hot tubs or saunas) or clothing that is too tight
- Some prescription, non-prescription and herbal medicines

What You Can Do

- 1) *Maintain good physical health.*
- 2) *Talk with your health care provider about your health conditions and medications.*
- 3) *Ask family members about a history of birth defects or any genetic conditions.*
- 4) *Talk with your partner about any concerns or feelings you have about becoming a father.*



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