

Focus on:

# Getting Pregnant

REFERENCE



**“The U.S. Public Health Service recommends that women of childbearing age get at least 400 micrograms of folic acid each day, through food sources and/or supplements. Findings from research indicate that the right amount of folic acid can help prevent certain types of birth defects and other problems during pregnancy.”**

**~National Institute of Child Health and Human Development**

## Prenatal Care

Getting early and regular prenatal care is one of the best ways to promote a healthy pregnancy. Prenatal care is more than just health care; it often includes education and counseling about how to handle different aspects of your pregnancy. Nutrition, physical activity, what to expect from the birth itself and basic skills for caring for your infant are just a few of the discussions you'll have with your health care provider. Prenatal visits also give you a chance to talk to your health care provider about any questions or concerns you have related to pregnancy, childbirth and parenthood.

## Folic Acid

For women who are thinking about getting pregnant, health care providers recommend supplementing the diet with folic acid for three months before pregnancy. These supplements should continue for at least the first three months of pregnancy, and preferably throughout your entire pregnancy. Prenatal vitamins are a good way to get extra folic acid into the diet and your health care provider will be able to give you a prescription for these. Even though many foods available in the U.S. are fortified with folic acid, women considering pregnancy may find it hard to get the full amount of folic acid from food sources alone, so prenatal vitamins are important.

## Immunizations

Women considering pregnancy should make sure that they have been properly vaccinated and are immune to certain diseases, such as rubella (also called German measles) and chickenpox. These diseases put the fetus at increased risk for a variety of problems, including deafness, heart problems, cataracts of the eyes and mental retardation, just to name a few. However, if you are already pregnant, please discuss prior to getting vaccinated for these diseases with your physician as health problems may arise.



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# Getting Pregnant Continued...

**TIPS**



## Healthy Behaviors

Vitamins and immunizations aren't the only things that can help promote a healthy pregnancy. The following also affect a healthy pregnancy:

- › Diet
- › Physical activity
- › Medications
- › Smoking
- › Alcohol
- › Drug use
- › Environmental factors

## Diet, Physical Activity and Medications

Women thinking about becoming pregnant should take steps to improve or maintain their own level of good health before getting pregnant. A healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, lean protein and whole grains helps to ensure that the fetus has all the nutrients it needs to grow and develop normally. Maintaining a healthy weight, both before and during pregnancy, can help to reduce stress on the mother's body and lower the risk of certain disorders during pregnancy, such as gestational diabetes and high blood pressure. Being active before and during pregnancy, if approved by a health care provider, can help women maintain their healthy weight and can improve the function of the circulatory, cardiovascular and skeletal systems.

Keeping dangerous substances, such as medications, supplements and high amounts of vitamins out of your body during pregnancy is important. Certain medications can affect the growth and development of the fetus. Women who are thinking about getting pregnant should discuss all medications, supplements and vitamins they are currently taking with their health care providers.

## Smoking, Alcohol and Drug Use

To reduce the risk of problems during pregnancy, health care providers recommend that women stop smoking, stop drinking alcohol and stop using drugs, completely, as research shows that using these substances, even now and again or in small amounts, during pregnancy can cause health problems for the fetus, some of them severe. Many of these problems can have life-long effects and

can be avoided. They also recommend you maintain a substance-free lifestyle throughout your pregnancy and after the birth of your baby as many of these substances can get into the baby's system through breast milk. It's also been proven that babies or young children who live in a

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house with people who smoke are more likely to develop diseases, such as asthma and certain types of cancer.

Alcohol and drug use may also make it harder for some women to get pregnant. If you fear you will partake in any of these activities during pregnancy, please discuss it with your health care provider. They are there for you and the health of your baby.

If you are thinking about getting pregnant, talk to your health care provider about how best to promote a healthy pregnancy, in a way that takes your medical history and lifestyle into consideration.

**For more information on Getting Pregnant, log on to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at [www.nichd.nih.gov](http://www.nichd.nih.gov)**

**For more information about Nationwide Better Health visit [nwbetterhealth.com](http://nwbetterhealth.com). Or contact your benefits representative.**



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