Planning for Pregnancy

Body Changes you may experience during pregnancy

Fatigue:
Tips for relief include:
- Don't overdo it.
- Nap when you can
- Accept help
- Eat right, your body needs extra calories

Morning Sickness:
Tips for relief include:
- Avoid greasy, fried or spicy foods, or foods with strong smells
- Certain odors may trigger nausea
- Make sure you drink enough fluids
- Take prenatal vitamins at bedtime
- Eat a light snack before getting out of bed and in between meals so your stomach is not empty
- Crackers, cereal, rice, pasta, some vegetables and fruits are easy to digest
- Contact your doctor about other alternatives

What to do Before You get Pregnant

Deciding that you want to get pregnant and have a baby is a big decision that requires a lot of thought and planning. Talking to your doctor before you decide to get pregnant is a great idea, and also one of the best things you can do, especially if you are over the age of 30. This visit gives you the opportunity to discuss nutritional needs and health care concerns, as well as many other relevant topics. The doctor will be able to inform you of ways to improve your health, thus providing your baby with the best start possible.

At this initial visit be sure to talk to your doctor about your diet, physical activity, smoking, alcohol or drug use, and sexual history. This information will enable your doctor to give you accurate advice concerning the need, or lack thereof, of changing your behaviors before you get pregnant. You also should discuss any medications (over-the-counter as well as prescription medications) that you are currently taking, with your doctor. The doctor will let you know if it is safe to continue taking your medications while you are trying to conceive and/or during pregnancy. If you have diabetes, high blood pressure, an eating disorder, depression, or other chronic or long-term health conditions, you will need to talk to your doctor about how your condition could possibly affect your health and pregnancy. If you have a health condition, there are many things that you and your doctor can do to help you have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby.

While you are on your initial visit to the doctor, you will also want to discuss with him/her your family history. Genetic counseling is available to you as well as testing for some genetic conditions such as Tey-Sachs disease or sickle-cell anemia. Your doctor will also want to make sure that you have had all your immunizations, especially Rubella. If you have not had chickenpox or Rubella, you need to make sure that you are vaccinated at least 3 months before getting pregnant. You may also want to be screened for Hepatitis B, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, gonorrhea, chlamydia, and herpes, and toxoplasmosis since these can harm you and your baby.

It is very important to have a healthy lifestyle before and during your pregnancy. There are many things you can do to improve your overall health including:
- Eating a healthy diet that includes fruits, vegetables, grains and calcium-rich foods.
- Try to be physically active for 30 minutes a day, most days of the week, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.
- If you have a cat, do not handle the cat litter. It can carry toxoplasmosis, a parasitic infection that can cause birth defects.
**Ligament Pain:**
Tips for relief include:
- Warm, NOT HOT baths
- Lie on your side and support your belly
- Get up correctly

**Tender Breasts:**
Tips for relief include:
- But a comfortable, well-fitting nursing bra which offers extra support

**Dizziness:**
Tips for relief include:
- When getting out of bed, sit up first, wait a few seconds, then stand up
- If a room is very warm, seek a cooler spot.

*info received from Yale-New Haven Hospital at www.ynhh.org*

---

**Don’t**
- eat uncooked or undercooked meats or fish.
- If you smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs, STOP. These can cause long-term damage to your baby.
- Stay away from toxic chemicals like insecticides, solvents (like some cleaners or paint thinners), lead, and mercury. Most dangerous house-hold products will have pregnancy warnings on their labels.
- Avoid hot tubs, saunas, and x-rays.
- Limit or eliminate your caffeine intake from coffee, tea, sodas, medications, and chocolate.
- Get informed. Read books, watch videos, go to a childbirth class, and talk with experienced moms.

Following these guidelines will help you and your baby to be healthy during and after pregnancy. One of the most important things you can do is to talk to your doctor often before, during, and after pregnancy. Be sure to ask them any questions that you might have and answer their questions honestly, because everyone who is involved wants the best for you and your baby.

*information received from The National Women’s Health Information Center at www.4women.gov “Pre-Pregnancy Planning”*

For further information regarding this article please contact Jaclyn M. Cheek at the Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project, Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, 1256 Briarcliff Rd. NE, Suite 324W Atlanta, GA 30306. You can also phone us at 404-712-9800 or visit our website at www.emory.edu/MSACD

---

NEWSLINE Editor: Jaclyn M. Cheek
Contributing Author: Jaclyn M. Cheek

Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project
1256 Briarcliff Rd., NE Suite 323W
Emory West Campus
Atlanta, GA 30306

The Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project is funded in part by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD).