

New U.S. guidelines aim to boost awareness

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All women who are able to become pregnant should treat themselves and be treated by healthcare professionals as being pre-pregnant, new U.S. guidelines say.

The guidelines by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, with help from a number of healthcare organizations, aim to boost public awareness of "preconception health" by managing risk factors before pregnancy, the CDC's Samuel Posner told The Washington Post.

Among cautions that run from the start of menstruation to menopause, women are advised to take folic acid supplements, keep vaccinations up to date, keep chronic conditions such as asthma and diabetes under control and maintain a healthy weight

The plan says women should avoid smoking, lead-based paints and cat feces.

The guidelines aim to reduce infant mortality. Some 28,000 U.S. infants died in 2003.

The U.S. infant death rate is higher than most industrialized nations, advocacy group Save the Children said.

The CDC report also notes 17 million U.S. women lack insurance and are likely to forgo pre-pregnancy healthcare.

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