

10 tips to prepare for pregnancy

January 29 2015, by Ryann Nickerson

For women of childbearing age looking to become pregnant, it is never too early to engage in healthy habits to ensure that she has a healthy pregnancy and her child has a healthy first step.

Daily consumption of [folic acid](#), even before a woman knows she is pregnant, is crucial. But that isn't the only thing that women of childbearing age can do to promote good health before, during and after [pregnancy](#). Jacinda Nicklas, M.D. is an internist whose work focuses on the importance of healthy behaviors before, during, and after pregnancy to help women avoid diabetes and [cardiovascular disease](#).

"For some women, [pregnancy complications](#) like [gestational diabetes](#) and preeclampsia unmask a high risk for future diabetes and cardiovascular disease," states Dr. Jacinda Nicklas. "Achieving a [healthy weight](#) before pregnancy, and gaining weight within current guidelines can decrease the risk for complications during and after pregnancy. It is worth taking the time to develop [healthy habits](#) that will carry you through your pregnancy and after your baby's birth."

Are you looking to become pregnant soon? Here are 10 tips to make sure that you are starting your pregnancy on the right foot:

1. Get to a healthy weight. Being overweight or obese before pregnancy increases your risk for conditions like gestational diabetes and preeclampsia. Obesity in pregnancy is also the leading risk factor adverse outcomes, including loss of the pregnancy and other neonatal complications.

2. Visit your doctor for a baseline. During this visit, your doctor will check your general health to make sure that you are in the best health to become pregnant. He or she may ask about your family history, what medications are you taking, and make sure that you are properly vaccinated.
3. Begin a healthy exercise regimen. Getting in the habit of exercising regularly will get your pregnancy off to a good start. Even if you do not exercise before pregnancy, experts now recommend 150 minutes per week for all pregnant women who have been cleared for physical activity by their doctors.
4. Focus on healthy eating. It is never too late to develop healthy food habits. One study showed an association between regularly eating fried food before conception increases the risk of developing diabetes during pregnancy. Excess gestational weight gain increases risks for the mother, makes it more difficult to lose the baby weight, and increases the risk for your baby to become overweight or obese.
5. Start taking prenatal vitamins, including folic acid, a B vitamin that can be found in beans, nuts, lean meat, and fish, as well as many multi-vitamins.
6. Stop taking drugs, alcohol & tobacco
7. Carbs are not the enemy. Recent studies show that complex carbs can be part of a healthy diet during pregnancy, and high fat diets may be harmful. Instead of eliminating carbs, healthy carbs like whole grains, legumes and other carbs that are lower in simple sugars.
8. Increase your intake of leafy greens for their vitamins A, C, and K.
9. Avoid fish high in mercury that can be harmful to your baby's developing nervous system.
10. Rest, relax, and enjoy your pregnancy.

Dr. Nicklas is developing and testing Fit After Baby, an innovative

postpartum program. It uses mobile devices, including cell phones, to deliver a specialized lifestyle intervention program for women who had recent complicated pregnancies, including diabetes and preeclampsia. By helping these women lose weight and make healthy changes in the year after they give birth, she hopes to prevent diabetes and heart disease.

Provided by University of Colorado Denver

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