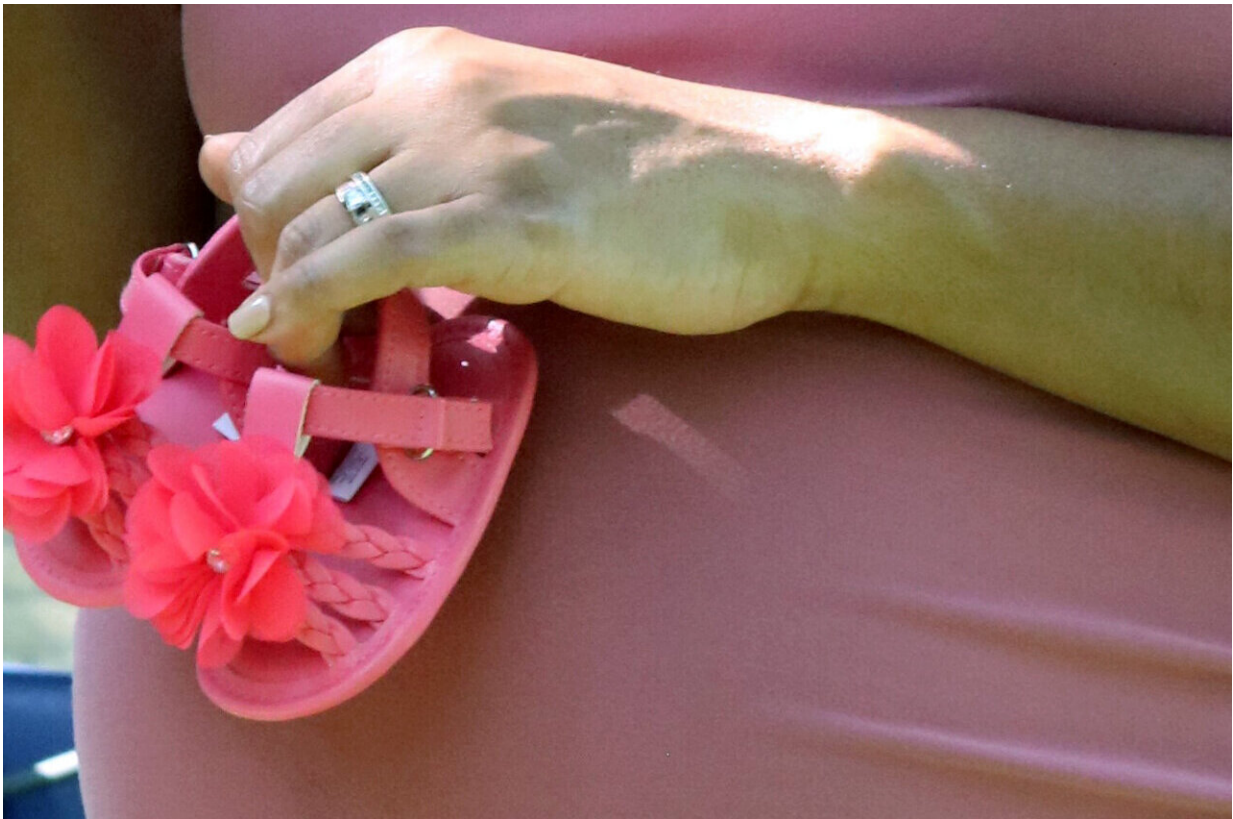


# A heart-healthy life begins with good prenatal care

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Credit: American Heart Association

Statistics show more babies are born in August and September than any other time of the year. That means a lot of future parents will soon learn they're expecting. The American Heart Association says it's never too

early to start prenatal health care to help keep mom and baby heart healthy.

Poor heart health puts both mothers-to-be and their children at risk. Heart disease is the leading cause of pregnancy-related death causing more than 1 in 4 [pregnancy-related deaths](#) (26.5%), according to the [American Heart Association Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics 2022 Update](#). A [study](#) published in 2022 in the journal, *Circulation*, found that only about 40% of women in the U.S. who give birth have good heart health prior to their pregnancy with excess weight being the major driver of poor pre-pregnancy health.

According to Michelle A. Albert, M.D., M.P.H., FAHA, volunteer president of the American Heart Association, even if a woman isn't at her healthiest before becoming pregnant, it's never too late to work on getting healthier for her baby and herself.

"Pregnancy is often a pivotal time in a woman's life from both short and long term perspectives. For some, it may be their first experience with a major medical condition, for most, it's a natural time to be more forward-thinking about their own health, as well as that of their baby," said Albert, who is the Walter A. Haas-Lucie Stern Endowed Chair in Cardiology, a professor of medicine at the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) and Admissions Dean for UCSF Medical School.

"Getting regular prenatal care as well as post-pregnancy cardiovascular risk factor management if appropriate along with making healthy lifestyle changes can improve the pregnancy and birth experience. Just as importantly, taking these steps may lead to a longer, healthier life for mom and baby."

A 2019 [study](#) in the *Journal of the American Heart Association* found that improving heart health during the early stages of pregnancy can lead

to a healthier pregnancy, as well as improve a woman's long-term heart health. The study noted the importance of health care providers paying close attention to a woman's heart health during pregnancy and promote lifestyle changes such as die

What's good for mom is also good for baby, according to [research](#) presented at the American Heart Association's 2019 Scientific Sessions. The study found that children are more likely to have good cardiovascular health during adolescence and beyond if their mothers had good heart health during pregnancy.

"The role of a healthy lifestyle during pregnancy cannot be emphasized enough." Albert said. "Healthy diet, moderate exercise including walking, smoking cessation and other healthy behaviors are important tools for a healthy pregnancy for both mother and child."

Women who have [heart disease](#) or who experience cardiovascular complications during [pregnancy](#) should work closely with their health care clinician to monitor their health and take medications as prescribed to treat and reduce cardiovascular risk factors that could follow them through life.

"There is still much to learn about the special risks of maternal and infant health related to cardiovascular health. This is an area the American Heart Association continues to follow closely, devoting research dollars and other resources to ensuring the healthiest outcomes for parents and babies throughout their lifetime," Albert said.

**More information:** Learn more about having a healthy pregnancy at [heart.org](http://heart.org)

Provided by American Heart Association

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