

# Expecting? Stay heart-healthy for you and your baby

December 27 2023, by Cara Murez

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It's never too late for an expectant mom to adopt healthy habits for her baby and herself.

The American Heart Association (AHA) offers some heart-healthy tips.

"Pregnancy is often a pivotal time in a woman's life, from both short- and long-term perspectives," said [Dr. Michelle Albert](#), immediate past president of the American Heart Association (AHA).

"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," Albert said in an AHA news release.

Poor heart health, including conditions such as [preeclampsia](#), puts both mothers-to-be and their children at risk, according to the AHA.

A 2022 study found that only about 40% of women in the United States who gave birth had good heart health before pregnancy. Excess weight was the major driver of poor pre-pregnancy health, according to the AHA.

"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," Albert said. "Just as importantly, taking these steps may lead to a longer, healthier life for mom and baby."

The AHA said [health care providers](#) can make a difference by paying close attention to a woman's heart health during pregnancy and promoting lifestyle changes.

If their mothers have good heart health during pregnancy, children are more likely to have the same, AHA said.

"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."

When [pregnant women](#) have heart-related problems, they should work closely with their doctor to monitor their health and take all prescriptions as prescribed, the AHA advised.

"There is still much to learn about the special risks of maternal and infant health related to cardiovascular health," Albert said. "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."

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on having a healthy [pregnancy](#).

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Citation: Expecting? Stay heart-healthy for you and your baby (2023, December 27) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-12-stay-heart-healthy-baby.html>

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