

10 Things to do before getting pregnant

Pre-pregnancy health

There are some things that can impact a baby even before you become pregnant. Things like the food you eat, habits you may have and health conditions that you may be dealing with. Here are a few things that you can discuss with your health care provider to help you plan for a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby:

- 1. Be prepared**

Family Planning is your ability to have children when you want to have them. Being able to prepare financially for your children is a benefit of family planning. The recommended time-frame between pregnancies is at least 2 years before the next pregnancy. TennCare covers most birth control methods. The use of birth control can help you make your own decisions about what may be best for you.
- 2. Don't use drugs**

Certain medications can cause birth defects or issues during pregnancy. This includes some prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, diet or herbal supplements and street drugs. It is important to tell your health care provider about all of the medications you take. Do not stop taking prescription medication until you have talked to your health care provider. If you need help to stop taking prescription or street drugs, your health care provider can help with this too. It is important to discuss reliable birth control options with your health care provider if you are taking any type of medications or street drugs.
- 3. Don't smoke or drink alcohol**

Alcohol and smoking are not good for you or your baby. Doing these while pregnant can cause things like brain damage, birth defects, preterm delivery and fetal death. There is no safe amount of alcohol or cigarette smoke when you are pregnant. Second hand smoke may be just as harmful. It is best to quit before you become pregnant.
- 4. Consider your health**

Some medical conditions can cause issues during pregnancy. Diabetes, high blood pressure, depression and seizure disorders are examples. Talk to your health care provider before you become pregnant. There may be things that you can do to reduce your risks.
- 5. Take folic acid**

All women need folic acid every day. It is recommended that you have at least 400mcg if you are planning a pregnancy. This can prevent some birth defects of the brain and spine.
- 6. Eat a healthy diet**

Being overweight can complicate a pregnancy. High blood pressure, preeclampsia, preterm birth and gestational diabetes are more common if you are over-weight. A healthy diet can help both you and the baby.
- 7. Get tested**

Some infections are passed through sexual contact. You may know these as STDs. They are harmful during pregnancy and may affect your ability to become pregnant. Get tested if you think you or your partner has an STD. Women need to have regular PAP smear (cervical screening test). If you are sexually active or pregnant you should be tested for STD's. Get tested for HIV if you are at risk.
- 8. Lower your stress**

Stress is never good for you or your baby. If feelings of worry or sadness get in the way of your daily life, talk to your health care provider about how to deal with these feelings.
- 9. Know your history**

Family history can sometimes impact your ability to have a healthy pregnancy. Make sure to share your family history with your health care provider. If certain issues run in your family or if you have had trouble with previous pregnancies, your health care provider may suggest genetic counseling. This is a place for you to discuss risk factors and possibly test for any genetic conditions that could be passed on to your baby.
- 10. Talk about it**

Talk to your health care provider about any concerns you have before you decide to get pregnant.