

Show Your **LOVE!**



Steps to a **Healthier me** and **baby-to-be!**



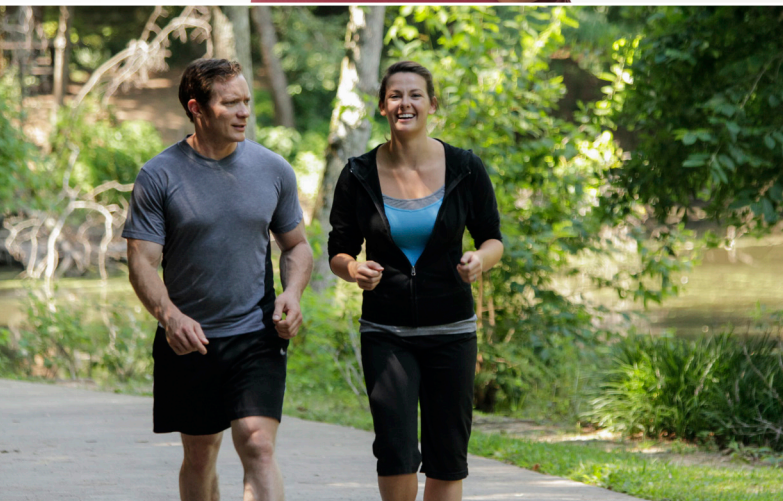
You have thought about your goals for school, for your job or career and for your health. You have also thought about how having children fits in with those goals, and you have decided that you want to become pregnant. Your preconception health (before pregnancy health) is very important and can affect the health of your future baby. By making a plan before getting pregnant and taking the time to get healthy, you can take the steps to a healthier you and baby-to-be. This is a tool to help you do that.

Start by choosing your goals for this year. It is easier to focus on 2 – 3 goals. Then use the checklist below to set your plan into motion.

Date plan made or revised: _____

My top 3 goals for this year are

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
National Center on Birth Defects
and Developmental Disabilities

Show
Your
Love  Preconception
Health



Goals for a Healthier me and baby-to-be!

Changes in insurance plans might mean that you (and your family) are eligible for some preventive health services, such as screening, vaccinations, contraception (birth control) and counseling, with no co-payment or deductible. To learn more, talk with your health insurance company agent.

1. Plan pregnancies.

- Decide which goals to meet before having children – school, work, financial.**

- Use contraception (birth control) correctly and at all times until we are ready to get pregnant.**

I use _____.

I will talk with my doctor (or nurse practitioner, nurse midwife, physician assistant) if I have new health issues or am taking medicines that might affect my method of contraception.

I will talk with my doctor about when and how to stop using my contraception.

- Make sure I have my chosen method of contraception.**

IUD or implant.

Depo-Provera (contraceptive shot).

Birth control pills, patch, or ring.

Condoms.

Spermicidal gel, cream, foam, suppository, or sponge.

Diaphragm or cervical cap: Make sure it fits properly, there are no holes, and I use it every time.

Remove, replace, update, refill, or get more by _____.

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/ForConsumers/ByAudience/ForWomen/FreePublications/UCM282014.pdf>

- Think about my goals for children.**

I want to have _____ child or children.

I want to get pregnant when I am _____ years old.

I want to have children _____ years apart. (*At least 18 months apart is recommended.*)

I want to finish having children when I am _____ years old.

- Make a regular appointment with my doctor.**

My next appointment is _____.

I will talk with my doctor about the prescribed and over-the-counter drugs I am taking and which ones I need to stop or change.

- Reminder! Take this with me to the appointment.**

2. Eat healthy foods.

Planning meals and snacks ahead of time and having the food on hand make it less likely that I will make unhealthy choices.

- Make a list before I go to the grocery store, farm stand or market, or neighborhood garden.**
- Include plenty of vegetables and fruits. (Eat my colors!)**
- Shop the outside edge of the store where the healthiest food is sold.**

3. Be active.

Setting aside a time for regular physical activity and being active with a friend will help me keep my plan. Fitting in several 10 minute physical activity sessions throughout the day can help me reach my activity goal.

- Try to get 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each week.**

At _____.
(*times—after lunch, after work, etc.*)

By _____.
(*walking, going to the gym, etc.*)



Goals for a Healthier me and baby-to-be!

3. Be active. (continued)

- My exercise friend.
My exercise friend is _____.
- Find ways to be active at home and at work.
Walk outside during lunch.
Other _____.

4. Take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid daily.

Folic acid is good for my health. Taking it daily will help prevent birth defects of the brain and spine when I decide to or if I get pregnant before I am ready.

- Take a vitamin with folic acid every day unless I eat a serving of breakfast cereal that says it has 400 mcg of folic acid on the nutrition label.
- Place vitamins by my toothbrush or on the kitchen counter or _____ to help me remember to take them daily.

5. Protect myself from sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Abstinence (not having sex) is the best protection from STIs

- Agree to have sex with only one person who has agreed to have sex with only me.
- Buy a supply of condoms, and use them correctly and every time.
- Get checked if I have been exposed to STIs.
<http://www.cdc.gov/std/healthcomm/the-facts.htm>.
- If needed, take all the medicine for the full time as directed by my doctor.

6. Protect myself from other infections.

http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/pregnancy_gateway/infections.html.

- Wash my hands frequently with soap and water.

- Ask my partner to change the cat litter.
- Stay away from people who are sick.
- Try not to share food, drinks, utensils with young children.

7. Avoid harmful chemicals, metals, and other toxic substances around the home and in the workplace.

<http://www.prhe.ucsf.edu/prhe/pdfs/ToxicMatters.pdf>.

http://www.marchofdimes.com/pregnancy/stayingsafe_indepth.html

8. Make sure my vaccinations (shots) are up-to-date.

Vaccinations are our best defense against many diseases. Sometimes, those diseases can cause serious problems. I want to protect myself against those diseases.

- Remember to get a flu shot every year, especially if I am pregnant.
- Check the vaccination schedule before I see my doctor
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/easy-to-read/adult.html>.
- I need _____.
- Remind my doctor to update my vaccinations.
- My appointment is _____.

9. Manage and reduce stress and get mentally healthy.

- Learn more about getting mentally healthy.
<http://www.womenshealth.gov/mental-health/>
<http://womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/fact-sheet/stress-your-health.cfm>
<http://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/default.htm>.
Call the National Health Institute (1-866-615-6464).



Goals for a Healthier me and baby-to-be!

9. Manage and reduce stress and get mentally healthy. (continued)

- Be aware of things that cause me stress.**
- Make a plan to reduce my stress.**
Get enough rest.
Exercise to lift my mood.
Limit alcohol and avoid cigarettes and other drugs.
- Find a support person or group, if needed.**
My support person or group is _____.

10. Stop Smoking.

Smoking is not healthy for me or others around me. I want to be healthy! Second hand smoke is not healthy either. I will avoid being around people when they smoke and will ask my partner not to smoke around me. Smoking can cause problems for the woman, such as difficulty getting pregnant, separation of the placenta from the womb too early resulting in bleeding, placenta covering the cervix which can cause bleeding, and the water breaks too early. Problems for the baby include being born too small, being born too early, dying before birth or after birth, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and possible birth defects. <http://www.cdc.gov/features/pregnantdontsmoke/index.htm>.

- Make an appointment with my doctor to talk about help for this.**
My appointment is _____.
- Find a support person or group for additional help.**
Contact information for support _____.
- Check out www.BeTobaccoFree.gov and <http://smokefree.gov/>**
Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-7848-669)

11. Stop using street drugs as well as prescription medicine that are not mine.

Taking drugs not prescribed for me is not good for me or my baby-to-be. There are different effects depending on the drugs used. I want my baby and me to be as healthy as possible!

- Make an appointment with my doctor to talk about help for this.**
My appointment is _____.
- Find a support person or group for additional help.**
Contact information for support _____.

12. Reduce my alcohol intake before I try to get pregnant, and stop drinking while trying to get pregnant.

Drinking alcohol can be habit forming. Drinking alcoholic drinks when trying to get pregnant and during pregnancy can cause problems for me and my baby. I want my baby and me to be healthy and free of bad habits. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/>.

- Reduce my drinking to less than 7 drinks a week and never more than 1 on any occasion before trying to get pregnant. <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDocExecSumm.pdf>.**
- Make an appointment with my doctor to talk about help for this.**
My appointment is _____.
- Stop drinking when I start trying to get pregnant and right away if I find myself pregnant before planned. Drinking during pregnancy can cause birth defects. There is no known safe level of alcohol in pregnancy.**
- Find a support person or group for additional help.**
Contact information for support _____.



Goals for a Healthier me and baby-to-be!

13. Stop partner violence.

Abuse can be emotional, physical, or sexual. No one deserves to be abused. I love myself and my child or children enough to take steps to deal with violence if it should happen to me or my family.

- Talk with my doctor.
- Talk with a counselor.
- Make a plan.

Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TDD).

14. Manage my health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, overweight.

- Learn more about my health condition(s).
- Talk with my doctor about a plan to manage my health condition(s) and my medicines.
My appointment is _____.
- Find a support person or group to help me with the plan.
My support person's or group contact information is _____.
We meet _____.
(when and where)

15. Learn about my family's health history.

Learning about health problems in my family can help my doctor and me determine which problems to look for and how to prevent or deal with them.

- Ask my parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins about any health problems in the family. _____
- Keep a record of my findings. <https://familyhistory.hhs.gov/fhh-web/familyHistory/start.action>.

- Update yearly.

16. Get regular checkups. See my doctor as needed for other problems.

My doctors' names and phone numbers are _____
_____.

- Schedule my yearly appointment.
My appointment is _____.
- Schedule an appointment to talk with my doctor about _____.
My appointment is _____.

Questions to ask my doctor.

Your preconception health is important for you and your baby-to-be. Keep this checklist handy so that you can look at it regularly, update it, and talk with your partner and your doctor about how to best put this plan into action. Remember to take this tool with you to your appointment. Life is full of changes so make sure you update your plan regularly. Make time for yourself...Show yourself some love. Your baby will thank you for it.