



Prepping for a fit pregnancy

You're not pregnant—yet. But if you're trying to conceive or even contemplating a pregnancy, keep reading.

These safeguards—taken before pregnancy—can increase your chances of having a trouble-free pregnancy and a healthy baby.

Arrange a pre-pregnancy checkup.

This is an opportunity for your doctor to evaluate your health and lifestyle and identify any habits or hidden health problems that may be risky for a developing baby. Your doctor will also review any medicines you take to be sure they will be safe to use once you're pregnant.

Check your immunizations. Vaccines can keep you safe from diseases (such as German measles) that could harm your baby if you become ill while pregnant.

Focus on folic acid. Getting enough of this B vitamin both before and during pregnancy can lower your risk of having a baby with birth defects. You'll

want to take a multivitamin with at least 400 micrograms of folic acid every day. It's also a good idea to eat lots of foods rich in folic acid, such as leafy, dark green veggies, like spinach; citrus fruits; and enriched breads and cereals.

Move your body. How active you can be during pregnancy depends on how fit you were before. So it's a good idea to follow a fitness routine before your baby is on the way.

Watch what you eat. Load up on fruits, veggies, calcium-rich foods, and whole grains. Your baby will start out with a good supply of nutrients.

Strive for a healthy weight. If you weigh too little, you may have trouble getting pregnant. And carrying too many pounds puts extra stress on your heart, especially during pregnancy.

Get any health problems under control. If you have a chronic health condition, making sure it's well managed before you conceive will be in your future baby's best interest.

Sources: American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; March of Dimes; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Tips to help ease morning sickness

While it may seem like morning sickness will last forever, it usually goes away after the first trimester.

These simple steps may help you deal with it:

- Eat small meals every two to three hours instead of three big ones. You're less apt to have an empty stomach, which can bring on nausea.
- Skip foods with strong smells. Now that you're pregnant, you may have an exaggerated sense of smell. Aromas you once tolerated may suddenly make you feel queasy.
- Reach for starchy foods when your tummy is upset. Smart choices include plain toast or dry cereal.
- Go easy on spicy, fatty, or fried foods. All can unsettle your stomach.
- Ease into your morning. Sit on the side of your bed for a minute or two before standing up. Movement often intensifies nausea. Before getting out of bed, try eating a few crackers.

Finally, be sure to alert your doctor if your nausea becomes severe—for instance, if you usually vomit after eating or drinking or you begin to lose weight.

Source: American Dietetic Association

To learn more, visit the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists website at acog.org.