

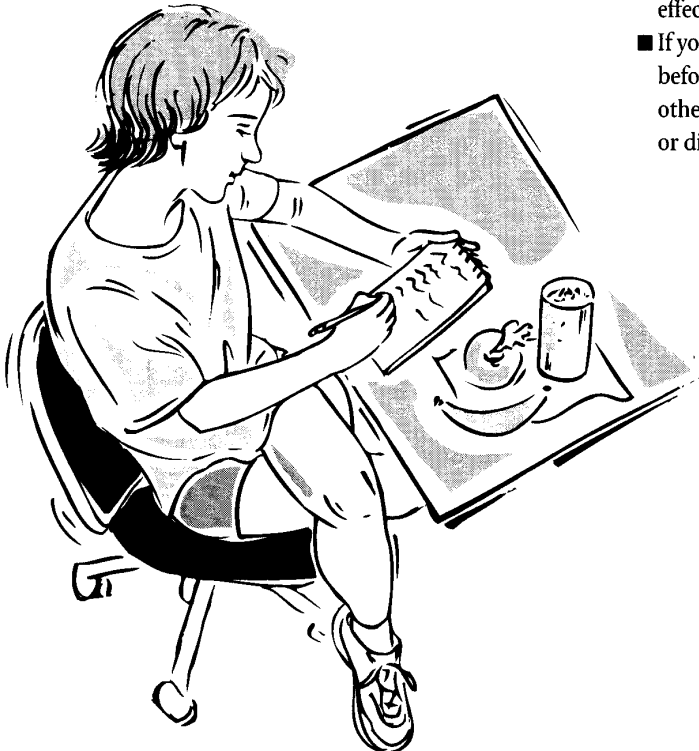


Preparing Your Body for Pregnancy

Among the many things to consider when planning to have a child is the mother's health. A healthy baby is the goal, but a healthy mother is just as important. For example, gaining too much weight during pregnancy can put you at risk for high blood pressure or gestational diabetes. Both could result in serious health problems for your baby, including miscarriage or stillbirth.

Pre-Pregnancy Exam

Pre-pregnancy exams with an obstetrician are becoming a popular planning step. They can be part of your regular physical exams or you can make an appointment to just ask questions about how and when to become pregnant. This is a good time to discuss your family medical history and your current health. If you suffer from diabetes, high blood pressure or heart or kidney problems, your doctor will want to treat you before you become pregnant. This is also a good time to get vaccinated to protect against diseases such as rubella, chicken pox or hepatitis B.



Taking Care of Yourself

Pregnancy can be hard on a woman's body. The time to begin taking care of your body is before you conceive.

- Eat balanced meals.
- Discuss a safe exercise program with your doctor. You can do moderate exercises, such as walking, biking and swimming, to build your stamina and strengthen your cardiovascular system.
- Ask your doctor about taking prenatal vitamins before you conceive.

Cutting Out Harmful Substances

- Women who drink large quantities of caffeine every day may have a higher rate of miscarriage. Switch to decaf now.
- Give yourself time to kick the smoking habit before becoming pregnant, for your baby's health and your own. Tobacco use of any kind can harm your baby and contribute to raising your blood pressure, which can lead to a stroke. Stopping smoking will begin to reverse the effect almost immediately.
- If you're taking any medication, consult with your doctor before conception. Women who suffer from depression or other chronic diseases might need to change medications or discontinue medications before becoming pregnant.

And There's More...

- If you're overweight, lose the extra pounds before you become pregnant so there's less of a burden on your body.
- If you're underweight, gaining weight before you become pregnant is important for your health and your baby's health.
- If there's a lot of stress in your life, having a baby will add to what you already have to deal with. Make changes to your lifestyle before getting pregnant.
- Unresolved emotional issues can have a big impact. Your emotional health can affect your pregnancy, the baby's health and yours.