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Pregnancy Planning: The Ultimate Check List

Now that you've decided to get pregnant, there are appropriate steps you can follow to prepare for this life changing event. Ideally you and your partner want to allow yourself 6 months to go through a check list of pre-planning before actually becoming pregnant.

Did you know that 50% of pregnancies are unplanned? So if you're a planner and fall into the other half, here is the definitive checklist for becoming your healthiest self to prepare your body for pregnancy.

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Folic Acid & Autism - We all know the importance in taking folic acid three months before conception to reduce the incidence of spinal defects, aka neural tube defects.

- A recent study showed women who took folic acid before conception had a reduced incidence of autism.
- Taking folic acid 4 weeks before conception and up to 8 weeks into pregnancy had a 40% lower risk of giving birth to a child with autism.
- Making sure that your prenatal or multivitamin contains at least includes 400mcg-1mg of folic acid is vital.



Caffeine - Can you get that Café Latte or not during pregnancy?

- Caffeine is the most popular "over the counter" active stimulant used by women every day.
- Studies currently do not show that moderate caffeine consumption <200mg/day (12oz cup of brewed coffee) will lead to an increase miscarriage rate or affect your chance of conceiving.
- Limit your caffeine intake to one cup of coffee or 2 cups of tea/day during the pre-pregnancy period. Coffee has 50-70% more caffeine than tea.
- Know how much caffeine is contained in the foods and beverages you eat so you can keep the quantity under 200mg/day which is considered a safe amount for your growing baby.

Food & Beverages	Milligrams of Caffeine (Average)
Coffee (8 oz) Brewed, drip Instant	137 76
Tea (8 oz) Brewed Instant	48 26-36
Caffeinated soft drinks (12 oz)	37
Hot cocoa (12 oz)	8-12
Chocolate milk (8 oz)	5-8
Candy Dark chocolate (1.45 oz) Milk chocolate (1.55 oz) Semi-sweet chocolate (1/4 cup) Chocolate syrup (1 tbs)	30 11 26-28 3
Coffee ice cream or frozen yogurt (1/2 cup)	2
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, 2000.	



Older Mom's Conversations

- Concerns about infertility, medical complications and birth defects are more common in women over 35 and should be discussed months prior to getting pregnant.
- If you are single and do not have a partner the conversation of egg freezing can be discussed and explored.



Marijuana - Cannabis, pot, weed, Maryjane, however you refer to it, it is the most commonly used illegal substance in the world.

- Men and women innocently use it for a recreational activity not realizing its negative health effects.
- When trying to conceive marijuana has harmful effects on sperm and fertility.
- Marijuana causes less volume, less fertile and hyperactive sperm.
- Chronic marijuana users have the harmful byproduct, cannabinoid, present in their urine up to 30 days or longer.
- Tobacco, alcohol and all recreational drugs contain chemicals that are dangerous during the pre-planning period and pregnancy. These drugs have byproducts that are found in the vaginal fluids, affect the quality of sperm and ultimately the ability for the egg and sperm to fertilize.



It's all in the timing - Understanding when is the right time during your menstrual cycle to conceive is essential.

- On average, women have a period every 28 days.
- Ovulation is the time when the egg is available to be fertilized over a 24 hour period. Typically ovulation occurs 14 days prior to getting your period.
- Some women notice an "egg white and slimy" discharge around the time of ovulation while others actually notice a twinge or slight pelvic discomfort.
- Sperm lives for 72 hours and the egg lives for 24 hours. Have the sperm waiting for the egg.
- For example, if you have determined that you ovulate on Day 15 (Day 1 being the first day of your period), then you can have timed intercourse on Day 14, 15 and 16.
- Having intercourse on these days ensures that the sperm and egg are interfacing with hopes of an embryo being formed.
- I suggest purchasing an ovulation kit and or downloading the "maybe baby" app to help identify the fertile period of your cycle.



Doctors visit - A doctors visit 6 month before getting pregnant should always be included on the preconceptional care check list.

- Knowing your medical, family and genetic history is important.
- Good control of medical conditions prior to pregnancy is the key to avoid problems that can escalate during pregnancy and the post-partum period.



Medication, Supplements, Herbs and other potential harmful drugs to avoid

- Bring your paper bag of over-the-counter and prescription medications and herbs that you and your partner take on a daily basis for review.
- There are medications you might be taking that could be teratogenic or harmful to the embryo during the early stages of conception.
- Mega-dosing on vitamins, herbal medications and other extra dietary supplements should be stopped unless your healthcare provider approves them.



Diet, Weight, and Exercise

- Eating a complete and well balanced diet is a perfect way to optimize your health and energy level.
- It's important to know your BMI and strive to be your healthy weight.
- Regular exercise, as little as 30 minutes of moderately intense exercise a day, can improve your health and well-being. A minimum of 3-5 times a week is excellent for overall good health and preparedness for pregnancy.

It's never too early to become your healthiest self. Preparing for pregnancy should be thoughtful and deliberate. If you follow **Pregnancy Planning: The Ultimate Check List** this will ensure you are completely healthy and well educated as you begin the pregnancy cycle.