



Preconception Health Patient Information

As you plan for pregnancy, you have an opportunity to check your preconception health. There are a variety of issues that could impact the health and outcome of any future pregnancies and should be resolved prior to conception. Since these are general medical issues and not infertility, the tests should usually be covered by your insurance.

GENETIC SCREENING

Many individuals carry gene mutations on one or more of their chromosomes that may lead to serious medical conditions in their children. If you carry a single recessive mutation you won't manifest any problems but if your partner carries the same hidden mutation then there is a relatively high likelihood that a very serious disease can occur in your child. The likelihood of you being a mutation carrier varies according to your ethnic background and can be as high as 1 in 25 (e.g. cystic fibrosis). A blood or saliva test can be ordered by your provider to screen you and/or your spouse for 1 or more of these recessive mutations.

VACCINATIONS

There are specific infections that can have serious consequences if acquired during pregnancy. These diseases (e.g. rubella, varicella or chicken pox, seasonal flu) can be prevented with targeted immunizations that need to be administered before pregnancy. Checking your immunity status is advised prior to conception even if you have previously had a rubella or varicella vaccination since adequate immunity may not have been induced.

CONTROL OF CHRONIC DISEASE

A pregnancy will be less risky to you and your child if control of certain medical conditions is optimized. Some examples are:

- Diabetes and blood sugar control
- Hypertension: some common medications are contradicted in pregnancy
- Obesity: obese women may become more fertile even with a small decrease in weight
- Hepatitis: many people are hepatitis carriers and should be evaluated for active liver disease.

If you have other underlying medical conditions or medications, certain preparations may need to be put in place to protect your baby.

CANCER SCREENING

It is important that your annual exam and Pap smear is up to date before you conceive. A mammogram is also advised for all women age 40 or older.

MEDICATIONS

It is possible that a prescription drug may need to be changed or a dose modified before pregnancy. An over-the-counter medication you are using may pose risks in pregnancy. While generally continuing to respect non-traditional medicine, herbal supplements are discouraged because they are non-FDA approved. For more information go to www.4women.gov/faq/pregmed.htm.

SOME EXAMPLES OF CHRONIC DISEASE:

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Obesity

THYROID FUNCTION

There is an increased prevalence of thyroid dysfunction in infertile women and thyroid function can change with pregnancy. It is important to check your thyroid status prior to conception and then again in early pregnancy.

LIFESTYLE

You may need to modify your lifestyle in terms of alcohol consumption, smoking, and/or exercise to maximize your opportunity for a healthy pregnancy. This includes:

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Light exercise is encouraged but should be limited to no more than 4 hours of moderate exercise (maximum heart rate of 140 bpm) per week
- Quit smoking
- Avoid or limit alcohol to no more than 1-2 alcoholic beverages per week (females should not consume alcohol during pregnancy)
- Prevent Toxoplasmosis by avoiding cat litter and not eating uncooked meat

RECOMMENDED LIFESTYLE CHANGES

- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Light exercise
- Quit smoking
- Avoid or limit alcohol
- Prevent Toxoplasmosis

HEALTHY DIET, FOLIC ACID, AND IRON

Food plays a vital role in overall health. It is important to have a well balanced diet with whole foods. Avoid high intake of soy products which contain estrogens. Limit beverages that contain caffeine.

To ensure against neural tube defects in your child you will want to be ingesting an optimal dose of folic acid (800 mcg per day) prior to conception. Iron is another important supplement as many women are unknowingly anemic when they conceive. Vitamin D is also essential for overall health and in general it is advised to take 1000 IU Vitamin D in the summer and 2000 IU daily the rest of the year.