

Whether you're actively trying or just thinking about getting pregnant, you can take steps now to make the experience as healthy and joyful as possible. Print and carry this handy checklist to keep track of your efforts.

### Your Health

- Get a complete physical.
- Discuss with your doctor chronic medical conditions (diabetes, Crohn's disease, genital herpes) that may impact pregnancy.
- Review medications you're taking, and ask whether they should be altered or discontinued.
- Ask for a blood test to determine your immunity to childhood diseases such as rubella; get vaccinated if necessary.
- Review job-related hazards (poor air quality, chemicals, heavy lifting) to determine whether they could pose a risk to a developing fetus.
- Get a prescription for prenatal vitamins; start taking them three to six months before you plan to conceive.
- Assess your eating habits: Keep a journal of what you eat for one week.
- Cut back on fats and sweets.
- Follow FDA daily guidelines for good nutrition: 2-3 servings of calcium-rich foods; 7 servings of fruits and vegetables; 2 servings of lean, high-protein foods like beef, fish, or white-meat poultry; and 6 servings of grains, preferably whole-grain breads, cereals, or brown rice.
- Drink lots of liquids; at least 8 glasses a day of water, juice, and/or milk.
- Cut back on caffeinated beverages.
- If you currently have an exercise program, check with your doctor to make sure it's safe to continue during pregnancy. If not, make modifications as necessary.
- If you don't currently exercise, ask your doctor whether it's safe to start. Try low-impact activities like swimming or walking.

### Your Finances

- Find out if your insurance covers 100 percent of prenatal care/delivery. You may need to change to an in-network doctor, or choose one local hospital over another.
- If you don't have insurance, get some now. Depending on your location, individual HMO policies start at around \$200 a month -- substantially less than the cost of medical care for a pregnancy from start to finish.
- See an accountant or financial planner to discuss savings plans, both for baby's college and for other big-ticket items like nannies, day care, private preschools, and unfunded maternity or paternity leave.
- Determine whether you need two incomes to get by. If one of you wants to scale back to part-time, or quit working altogether to stay with the baby, start planning now.
- If you plan to keep working, find out about your company's maternity leave, telecommuting, and flextime policies.
- Start researching life insurance. You'll both need coverage once you have a child.

## **Lifestyle and Relationship Issues**

- Say good-bye to alcohol, drugs, and nicotine. If you can't kick the habit alone, get help from your doctor, your company's Employee Assistance Program, or support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous.
- Get some sleep. All-nighters can wreak havoc on your health -- and possibly, your fertility.
- Minimize stress. If possible, postpone stressful situations such as moving or changing jobs.
  
- Confront your demons. Childhood traumas, like losing a parent or being emotionally or physically abused, can profoundly impact your ability to parent. Unpack your emotional baggage now -- preferably with the help of a therapist, clergyman, or other professional -- to avoid passing it on to your kids.
- Address issues in your relationship. While babies can make a happy marriage even happier, they don't cure unhappy ones. If you're dissatisfied with your relationship, get help now.
- Discuss expectations with your partner and other family members. Expecting your mom to take care of the baby while you go back to work? Make sure she knows it. Similarly, talk with your partner about splitting child-care and household responsibilities after the baby comes.

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*All content here, including advice from doctors and other health professionals, should be considered as opinion only. Always seek the direct advice of your own doctor in connection with any questions or issues you may have regarding your own health or the health of others*