



PRE-PREGNANCY CHECKLIST

If you're thinking of becoming pregnant, the best first step is to prioritize your health. Your health care professional can guide you from preconception through pregnancy — and long past delivery — so you and your baby can be as healthy as possible.

Here are a some conversation starters to take with you to your next appointment with your health care professional.



HEALTH CONCERNS AND CONDITIONS

Tell your health care professional about your health, any preexisting conditions, issues or concerns.

- Will my current health affect my baby's health?
- Do I have any preexisting conditions that would make it unsafe for me to become pregnant?
- Based on my age and health, am I considered high risk for pregnancy? If so, what are those risks? How can I mitigate those risks to have a healthy pregnancy?
- How can I improve my health before I become pregnant?
- Will I need to see any specialists? If so, will you continue to be one of my doctors throughout my pregnancy?
- Should I have my blood sugar/blood glucose checked? If so, how often should I have it checked?
- Should I have my cholesterol checked? If so, how often should I have it checked?



RISK FACTORS AND FAMILY HISTORY

If cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, depression and/or other serious health issues run in your family, it's important to tell your health care professional. Family history can be a risk factor for developing cardiovascular disease, which is the number one cause of maternal death in the United States.

- Is there anything I can do to prevent from getting any of the diseases or conditions that run in my family?
- Will my baby be at greater risk for any conditions based on my health or family history?



WEIGHT

Carrying too much extra weight is the number one cause of poor pre-pregnancy health, followed by hypertension and diabetes — all of which put your heart health at risk. Keep a log so you can easily track your weight before you get pregnant.

- My BMI is [add your specific number]. Is that a healthy number for me to become pregnant?
- What should my goal weight be?
- How will my weight impact my pregnancy and my risk factors?
- Should I lose weight before I get pregnant? If so, how can I reach my goal in a healthy way?
- What are the health effects of being overweight or obese if I become pregnant?



BLOOD PRESSURE

Managing your blood pressure before pregnancy will help reduce your risk of developing gestational hypertension, preeclampsia or eclampsia while pregnant. These dangerous and sometimes life-threatening pregnancy complications can also increase your risk for cardiovascular disease later in life. Keep a log of your blood pressure readings so you can easily monitor them before you get pregnant.

- What is my blood pressure today? Is it within a healthy range?
- If family members or I have a history of high blood pressure, preeclampsia or eclampsia, what can I do to lower my blood pressure and reduce my risk of developing complications?
- How should I monitor my blood pressure? If I have a high reading, what should I do?



NUTRITION

Eating a nutritious diet of vegetables, fruit and lean protein is always important but even more so when you're considering pregnancy and when you become pregnant. Your health care professional may also want you to watch your sodium, which can contribute to high blood pressure.

- What changes should I make to my diet before becoming pregnant? How about after?
- I am a [vegetarian/pescatarian/vegan]. How do I make sure I'm getting the proper nutrition before and during my pregnancy?



EXERCISE

Being active is critical for good heart and mental health. The AHA recommends at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity, or a combination of both, preferably throughout the week. Choose an activity that you enjoy. If going to a gym isn't for you, try walking (outdoors or in a large retail space like a mall, big-box or warehouse store) or workout videos on Youtube. Before you begin a workout regimen, talk to your health care professional about the amount and types of exercises that are best for you.

- Based on what I'm doing now, do I need to modify my workout before becoming pregnant?
- Are there certain workouts I should avoid during pregnancy?



MEDICATIONS

Your health care professional can guide you on what medications are safe before, during and after pregnancy and may encourage you to begin taking a prenatal vitamin high in folic acid and iron. Always speak to your doctor before you make changes to or stop taking any prescribed medication. If you take certain drugs — including ACE inhibitors and ARBs for high blood pressure — or over-the-counter supplements, you should not become pregnant while on them. If you do become pregnant, let your doctor know immediately.

- Are my current medications, vitamins or supplements safe to continue taking before and during pregnancy?
- Will my medications need to change if I become pregnant and are there side effects to stopping these medications?
- Is there a prenatal vitamin you recommend?



SMOKING AND DRINKING ALCOHOL

If you use tobacco/vaping products, e-cigarettes and/or drink alcohol, you should stop using them before becoming pregnant.

- How do you recommend I stop using tobacco products?
- Is it OK to drink alcohol until I become pregnant?
- What are healthy ways to manage my stress instead of using tobacco products or drinking?

For more support or to connect with other moms and caregivers who have experienced pregnancy-related cardiovascular conditions, check out the American Heart Association's [Support Network Maternal Health Forum \(supportnetwork.heart.org\)](https://supportnetwork.heart.org).

To learn more, visit goredforwomen.org/pregnancy and have a conversation with your health care professional.