

Bathroom Briefs

Your line to good health!

Developed by: Health Policy Unit

Forsyth County Department of Public Health

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PRECONCEPTION HEALTH:

EVERY WOMAN CAN HAVE A HEALTHY BABY !

September is National Infant Mortality Awareness Month!!

What is Preconception Health?

Preconception health is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a woman's general state of health prior to pregnancy. It focuses on medical conditions and lifestyle behaviors that impact a woman's ability to have a healthy baby. Key elements of preconception health include:

- Having a regular medical provider.
- Practicing healthy lifestyle behaviors.
- Having strong social support.
- Maintaining a safe home and work environment.

Preconception health care refers to medical care given to women before and between pregnancies to manage medical conditions and lifestyle behaviors that could put her baby at risk. Key elements to consider include:

- Taking folic acid supplements.
- Getting Rubella vaccination.
- Management of chronic health conditions.
- Assessing epilepsy, blood thinning, or acne medicines such as Accutane.
- Reviewing prior pregnancy loss.
- Avoiding tobacco, alcohol, or illegal substances.
- Planning all pregnancies.
- Health education about weight, nutrition, exercise, and oral health.
- Health education for couples to understand genetic risks, mental health issues, and domestic violence.

A public health concern...why?

In spite of advances in medical care, poor birth outcomes are still an issue in the US. Every year, 12% of all babies are born too soon, 8% are born too small, and 3% have major birth defects. Factors that can affect healthy birth outcomes include:

- Smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Drinking alcoholic beverages while pregnant.
- Taking 400mg of folic acid every day.
- Being over- or underweight.
- Taking over-the-counter or other medicines not prescribed by a health care provider.
- Uncontrolled medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, obesity, or epilepsy.
- Poor oral health.



Late or no prenatal care is linked to poor birth outcomes. Women often begin prenatal care at week 11 or 12 of their pregnancy. This may be too late for babies at risk for health issues occurring in the first weeks of pregnancy, often before a woman even knows she is pregnant. Health risks may be too difficult to treat after this critical time, so being healthy **before** and **between** pregnancies is the best way to ensure that all babies are born as healthy as possible.



Women's Health

5 Steps to Get Ready for a Healthy Pregnancy

Being healthy before pregnancy and managing any chronic medical conditions is the best way to ensure the birth of a healthy baby. Good lifestyle behaviors on the part of women AND men can make a real difference for babies. Five steps to get ready for a healthy pregnancy:

- Take 400 micrograms of folic acid every day for at least one month before getting pregnant.
- Stop smoking and drinking alcohol.
- Get any medical conditions under control such as asthma, diabetes, oral health, obesity, or epilepsy. Make sure vaccinations are up to date.
- Talk to a health care professional about any over-the-counter and prescription medicines you are taking, including dietary or herbal supplements.
- Avoid contact with toxic substances at work or home that could cause infection, including chemicals or animal feces.

Men Can Make a Difference !

Men can encourage and support women by helping them plan and prepare for each pregnancy. It is important for men to pay attention to their own health and wellbeing during their reproductive years (18-44), as they play an important role in the wellbeing of the whole family. Here's how men can help:

- Know your family health history.
- Work and play safely.
- Get regular check ups.
- Make sure your vaccinations are up to date.
- Eat smart and get regular exercise.
- Stop smoking.
- Practice safe sex.

For more information about preconception health, please contact Debbie Mason, Director of Forsyth County Infant Mortality Reduction Coalition at Forsyth County Department of Public Health at 336-703-3260 or masonda@forsyth.cc