

## Are you planning a pregnancy

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at work and at home. Ask your health care provider about substances you work with if you suspect they may affect a pregnancy. Avoiding hot tubs, saunas, tanning beds, and jacuzzis is suggested because elevated body temperatures in the first trimester of pregnancy can increase the risk of neural tube defects.

3. Get a pre-pregnancy health checkup. This check-up should include a dental checkup, because oral health is an important contributor to overall health. Here are some topics to discuss with your health care provider:

- Family planning Talk with your health care provider about your family planning method and what to do if you want to become pregnant. Having babies at least two years apart can reduce the risk of pre-term delivery and low birth weight births.

- Immunizations and medications Make sure you are up to date with immunizations, especially measles and rubella. Check with your healthcare provider about any medications you are taking, including over-the-counter drugs.

- Health screenings You should be screened for infections, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or other health concerns. STDs can affect your ability to conceive and can be transferred to the baby.

- Preexisting medical conditions - Diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, epilepsy and other conditions may affect your ability to conceive and may have an impact on your pregnancy.

- Review your personal and family medical history. Your health care provider will address any questions you might have about previous pregnancies, family medical conditions, and related items. If you have

had a child with a genetic disorder, you may be referred for genetic counseling if appropriate.

4. Dad's health It is important for your partner to take care of himself as well. Exercising, eating right, stopping smoking and drinking, eliminating exposure to hazardous substances, and a physical exam that includes testing for STDs are some of the health-related issues he should consider.

Contribution by J. Nelson Weaver, Director of the Forsyth County Infant Mortality Reduction Coalition and Phyllis R. D'Agostino, Parenting Education and Infant Mortality Reduction Program Coordinator.

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