



Healthy Behaviors

Take Charge of Your Reproductive Health

Many of us know someone who has had a “surprise” pregnancy. In Florida, **half of all pregnancies are unplanned**. If you do not want to be one of those women with a surprise pregnancy, make sure you are taking the steps necessary to prevent pregnancy.

- **Plan your pregnancies so that you and your partner are in good health and are prepared for having a child.**
- Make sure that you use your birth control correctly.
- Know that you can get pregnant if you forget or skip a birth control pill.
- Antibiotics can interfere with your birth control pill, so you may not be protected from getting pregnant while you are taking antibiotics.
- **Babies born to healthy women are more likely to be healthy.**



Avoid Harmful Substances

Alcohol

- Abusing alcohol can hurt your own health, but especially hurts the health of an unborn baby.
- **No amount of alcohol is considered safe in pregnancy.** Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause a baby to be born with birth defects and mental retardation. Even exposure to small amounts of alcohol may cause learning disabilities in a baby.

Medications

If you are considering pregnancy, or not taking the steps to prevent pregnancy, it is important that you make sure that the medications you are taking are safe for a baby.

- **Some herbal medicines can be harmful to a baby.** Herbal products are not necessarily safe because they are “natural.”

Drugs

Illegal drugs are harmful to your health. If you get pregnant, they are especially harmful to the health of your unborn baby.

- Illegal drugs can cause a baby to be born too soon, too small, sick, and with serious birth defects.
- Some babies may even die as result of being exposed to these harmful substances.
- **If you use drugs, quit or get help now to quit.**

Prevent and Treat Infections

Studies suggest that **preterm labor is often caused by certain bacterial infections**, such as those involving the bladder, vagina, or uterus.

Oral Health - Infections such as periodontal (gum) disease may contribute to premature delivery.

- Brush your teeth at least two times a day and floss between your teeth every day.
- See a dentist at least once a year to have your teeth cleaned and your gums examined.

Sexual Health - Some sexually-transmitted infections can cause a woman to have problems getting pregnant later on.

- Be sure to be tested and treated for infections.

HEALTHY BEHAVIORS - continued

Immunizations -

- Immunizations are an important tool in helping to prevent some infections.
- Some immunizations cannot be given while pregnant, so make sure you are up-to-date with your immunizations before pregnancy.

Health Care Provider Instructions

My Next Steps

- Develop a reproductive plan with my partner.
- Discuss with my health care provider my plans to get pregnant or to avoid pregnancy and plan for how I can achieve my goals.
- Check to make sure my immunizations are up-to-date and get any immunizations I need before I get pregnant.

Keep in Mind

- For more information on how to be healthy before you get pregnant go to: <http://www.marchofdimes.com/>.
- For information on Healthy Start Services go to: <http://www.healthystartflorida.com/directory/directoryList.asp>.
- Treatment for drug or alcohol abuse is available by calling **1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)**.
- Find treatment providers in your area by clicking on <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>.
- Check the safety of all medications at: www.medlineplus.gov.
- Call **2-1-1** (Big Bend referral system) for telephone counseling, crisis intervention, and community referrals.
- If you are being hurt by someone, call the Florida Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-500-1119**.

References:

Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association - <http://www.fadaa.org/>
NetWellness Consumer Health Information - <http://www.netwellness.org/healthtopics/pregnancy/>
Medem: Connecting Physicians and Patients - <http://www.medem.com/index.cfm>
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/importance/index.htm>
BMI Calculator - <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/bmi/index.htm>
United States Department of Agriculture - <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>