

Planning for Pregnancy BEFORE YOUR NEXT PREGNANCY

Background

For most women and their children, it is best to wait until your baby is at least 12-18 months old before becoming pregnant again. Your body needs time to adjust, both physically and emotionally, to the birth of your baby. More than half of all pregnancies in the United States are unplanned. Much of a baby's development occurs within the first few weeks of pregnancy. That is why it is important to make sure you are as healthy as possible before becoming pregnant again.

Your Health

Choosing to wait 12-18 months before becoming pregnant again is a better choice for your overall health. Your body needs time to physically recover from the birth of a child, in order to grow a healthy baby again.

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Most parents experience stress when caring for a new baby. Stress can increase if you become pregnant again before you are ready. Your risk of having postpartum depression is higher if your pregnancies are too close together. During pregnancy, it is important to focus on caring for yourself and your growing baby. This is harder to do when already caring for a very young child.

The Health of Your Next Child

Waiting 12-18 months before becoming pregnant again is also better for the health of your next child. If you do not wait, your next baby has a higher risk of being born prematurely (too early—less than 38 weeks). These babies are more likely to have:

- Feeding problems
- Difficulty breathing
- Jaundice
- Slow weight gain
- Learning problems

If you have already had a child that was born prematurely (less than 38 weeks), your risk for having another child born too soon is even higher. That is why it is important if you have already had a child prematurely to wait 12-18 months before becoming pregnant again.

What You Can Do

- 1) *If you do not want another pregnancy right now, choose the best birth control method for you, even if you are breastfeeding.*
- 2) *As you think about planning your family, be sure to: stop smoking and stay quit, take a vitamin with folic acid every day, avoid all other drugs, including alcohol, and talk to your health care provider about how to manage your weight and any health conditions such as, diabetes, asthma, or high blood pressure.*



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